# Exploring the impact of the local professional football club on the residents' place image of a post-industrial municipality in the Netherlands

A case study research of the municipality of Emmen

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**Abstract**

A large share of the post-industrial areas in Europe is facing demographical decline. Residents that have a positive image of their own living environment are prouder of their city and are therefore more willing to stay in that region. Thus, it is interesting to study the place image of the residents of post-industrial areas in Europe to gain insight into the willingness of them to stay. This resident's place image will be central in the study. According to literature place image exist out of the associations residents have with a place and the appreciation of the physical appearance, social environment, community services and entertainment opportunities. A municipality that is facing population decline is the municipality of Emmen in the Netherlands. The municipality of Emmen has, according to literature, an asset that can be used to create pride and enthusiasm among local inhabitants: the local professional football club, FC Emmen. Therefore, this study hypothesized that the local professional football club positively impacts the residents' place image. A questionnaire was distributed online among residents of Emmen to get a better insight into the residents' place image of Emmen and the impact of the local professional football club on this image. Results indicated that residents associated the municipality mainly with the Zoo. However, the local professional football club also plays a role within the associations made and therefore in their place image. Furthermore, supporters of the football club are more positive on all the aspects of their municipality; the physical appearance, social environment, entertainment opportunities and community services, than non-supporters, with an overall significant level of $p=0,037$. Zooming in, it becomes clear that the differences between supporters and non-supporters is significant for the social environment and the physical appearance, with respectively $p=0,052$ and $p=0,075$. The differences for community service and entertainment opportunities are not significant. Overall, the results have indicated that the supporters have a more positive place image of the municipality than non-supporters. Therefore, it can be concluded that the local professional football club in Emmen impacts the place image of Emmen. This can be used by local government officials as a way to retain residents to the area.

**Key words**
Retaining residents, Place image, Residents' place Image, Local professional football club

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# 1. Introduction

In this chapter, the background of the study is explained, supplemented by the literature gap that is present, followed by the problem statement. The final section offers the reader the structure of the thesis.

## 1.1 Background

Research has shown that people who are positive about their living environment are also prouder of their living environment than people that perceive a negative image (Bramwell and Radwing (1996). Positive residents are also more willing to stay in their region (Bolton, 1992). Policymakers and city authorities are keen on retaining citizens to their area. Maintaining residents is especially crucial for post-industrial places struggling with population decline (Hospers, 2011). Therefore, policymakers aim to create a proud population that carries a positive image of their city. This study will look into the current resident's place image of a post-industrial municipality struggling with a declining population. The focus of the thesis will be on the municipality of Emmen, in the Northern part of the Netherlands.

Place image of residents is diverse and complex (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Chen, Chung and Petrick, 2013). Literature shows that four main categories of residents' place image can be distracted. These are physical appearance, community services, social environment and entertainment opportunities (Stylidis et al., 2016). The physical appearance refers to the attractive scenery or the architecture of a place and refers to the imageability of the city discussed by Lynch (1960). Social environment focuses on the more intangible attributes present in society. The features of the social environment include a clean, safe and friendly environment. Community services consist of attributes present in the legal framework of the locality, such as the local government and job opportunities. The last category of the residents' place image is the entertainment opportunities, which can include the nightlife of a place or the restaurants to visit (Stylidis et al., 2016).

A topic that is often used concerning pride for a geographical location is the notion of sports. Sports can create pride and enthusiasm among supporters for a specific club (Bale, 2000). These clubs are not placeless organizations but always exist in a particular location (Edensor and Millington, 2008). That sport can represent a specific place is most evident in the national team that represents their nation. During national sports matches, two localities compete against each other and are therefore set against each other. The rivalry with another county legitimizes the reality and perpetual upgrading of their own nation (Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002). This nationalism is especially present due to players' selection based on nationality and not the clubs' financial solidity. This thesis builds a bridge from what we know at a national level towards the knowledge gap if this also applies to local place image and local professional football clubs. This thesis will provide more insight into the impact of a professional football club on a residents' place image. The study will carry out a case study of the municipality of Emmen.

## 1.2 Research gap

Bramwell and Radwing (1996) and Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005) explained the goals of place image. They argue that place image is relevant for creating a positive view based on three main target groups: businesses, tourists and residents. Within the place image literature, the target groups, businesses and tourists have been in the academic spotlights frequently. The first one is focused on the domain of

marketing and administration. This domain view place image as a brand and an active strategy to attain investments in the city. In this way, place image is mainly relevant for a city's economic development, intending to attract businesses and employment (e.g. Warnaby and Medway, 2013; Govers, 2011). The other line of research is on the tourism perspective. Studies on place image have predominantly focused on the tourists' destination image. This image is often used to influence people's choice, experience and behaviour associated with a tourist place (Chen and Phou, 2013; Lin et al., 2007; Qu et al., 2011). The main goal of the tourism perspective is to attract tourists to the locality. It can be argued that the residents' place image is more complex than tourists due to the time spent in a place. This last group, residents, is well-understudied in the literature. Little is known about the residents' perspective. Although some research has been carried out on resident's place image, these investigations often focus on the resident's place image concerning the support for tourism development. Therefore, the concept is barely studied independently.

Furthermore, there is still little known about the imageability of small and middle-sized destinations (Cassia et al., 2018). We know that many capital and metropolitan cities have specific features that differentiate them from others, whereas smaller locations often lack a dominant image (Lynch, 1960). This makes it hard to communicate the place image of a smaller place. Therefore, it is difficult for residents to identify themselves with a city. A result can be that the emotional ties of residents to the area are weak, which is making them leave the site sooner (Bolton, 1992).

The last element that is unknown is the role of sports clubs within resident's place image. In the literature, it is known that promoting residents' pride might be through the elements of sports. In the Netherlands the most popular sport is Football. Therefore, this study will focus on this sport. Literature states that a football club can represent a particular place (Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002). Due to sports' competitive nature, football can create imaginations and discourses on 'us' and 'them' (Van Houtum and Van Dam, 2002). This othering takes on spatial characteristics as people identify themselves with and against places (Rijnks and Strijker, 2013). Some cities instrumentalize, exploit, and often subsidize the local football club in the search for acknowledgement by others. A football club can be a platform to market the area and put it on the 'rhetorical map' (Hauge and Mercer, 1998). Therefore, football can be an element impacting the residents place image. This is mainly discussed in the light of national football teams. This thesis hypothesizes that this nationalism can also be witnessed on a local scale. In this case, the local professional football club can impact the place image of residents of a post-industrial municipality in the Netherlands.

## 1.3 Objective of the study

This thesis uses a case study to examine the residents' place image and the impact of the local professional football club on this place image. The case study will be the municipality of Emmen with a particular focus on the football club 'FC Emmen'. The study aims to explore the impact of this football club on the resident's place image of the municipality of Emmen. This will be examined by conducting a questionnaire among the inhabitants of the municipality of Emmen, including supporters and non-supporters of the football club. The main question of this study is:

*"What is the impact of a local professional football club, FC Emmen, on the place image of residents of a post-industrial municipality, Emmen, in the Netherlands?*

The main question can be divided into the following sub-questions:
1) What is the residents´ place image of inhabitants of the municipality of Emmen?

2) What differences and similarities can be found in the residents' place image of Emmen among supports and non-supporters of FC Emmen?

3) How are the elements associated with the local professional football club perceived by supporters and non-supporters of FC Emmen?

## 1.4 Structure of the thesis

This chapter has introduced the issue the research concerns itself with. It has outlined the research gap and the research questions. In chapter two, an overview of relevant international scientific literature is presented. A conceptualization of the concept of place image will be provided. Explaining different lines of research follows this within the literature on place image. This section will be followed by an explanation of how football can play a role in a residents' perception of a place. Furthermore, the residents' place image attributes in the literature will be presented. The section will conclude with a conceptual model of the residents' place image tested in the remainder of the study. Chapter three is concerned with the methodological decisions made including reasons for quantitative research, a questionnaire, case study research and ethical considerations. This part will also include an explanation of the case study, the municipality of Emmen. Chapter four presents the results of the questionnaire undertaken during the study. The thesis will conclude with chapter five on the discussion and conclusion of the research. Afterwards, the literature consulted for the research can be found in the references and the appendix as referred to in this thesis.

# 2. Theoretical framework

This chapter presents relevant literature concerning residents' place image and the local professional football club. This chapter first provides an operationalization of the concept of place image, including an overview of existing literature of place image and the different scales on which it can exist. The following section will address the local professional football club within the place image of residents. The chapter will conclude with an explanation of the measurement of place image and the conceptual model.

## 2.1 Place image

The concepts and terminology surrounding place image are inconsistent in academic literature and among practitioners to this day. Image, identity and brand are used interchangeable (Stock, 2009). A prevalent definition of place image is that it represents the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions people have of a place (Kotler et al., 1993). The image also includes evaluations of these items (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990). Images are the mental conceptions that pull together everything that an individual knows, evaluates, and prefers about places (Walmsley, 1988 as cited in Ashworth & Voogd, 1990). Thus, images are preferences that have been filtered through each individual's construct (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990). The above shows that the place image is two-sided. It represents the associations people have, but also their appreciation of different elements within a place. Place image incorporates concepts including brand, visual image, reputation, sense of place, and the place's identity, all of which create an overall image of a place (Clouse & Dixit, 2016). Bramwell and Radwing (1996) and Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005) explain the goals of place image. They argue that place image is relevant for creating a positive image based on three main target groups: businesses, tourists and residents. However, there are two main lines of research regarding place image present in the current literature. These two mainly focus on the attraction of businesses and of tourists. The last target group, residents, is often left out in these studies and is highly understudied. The next part will briefly explain the two different lines of research.

### 2.1.1 Different lines of research

One of the main lines of study on which place image literature focuses is promoting the city to attract businesses and investments. This view is primarily used in studies on marketing and public administration. Promoting areas requires the 'sale' of the image of a particular location. In this way, it is possible to make it attractive to economic enterprises (Clouse & Dixit, 2016). Selling places to external parties makes one city stand out from other cities (Avraham & Ketter, 2008). The marketing of places is crucial because more than 70 per cent of location decisions are based on the image of a place (Clouse & Dixit, 2016).

The other line of study that is often used in place image literature focuses on place image to create a destination image for tourists. Often these studies examine how the place image can contribute to the support for tourists development (e.g. Sternquist-Witter, 1985; Henkel et al., 2006; Tosun et al., 2020). Tourism provides an essential economic contribution to a city (Chan et al., 2021). Optimal tourism management efforts can be made through imagery as a form of marketing effort called city branding (Chan et al., 2021). It is argued that comprehensive place image studies are an effective vehicle for assessing tourism destinations' strengths and weaknesses. Particularly concerning the perception of actual and potential tourists (Selby & Morgen, 1996). Part of the literature of tourists' place image

does take the residents' perspective into account. This primarily includes research on the support of local residents for tourist development in a region (e.g. Sethi & King, 1994; Schroeder 1996, Sternquist-Witter, 1985). For example, Sternquist-Witter(1985) examines the different attitudes towards a tourists resort from the local businesses' perspective, or Schroeder (1996) researched how residents perceive their state as a tourists destination. It has been known that the place image of tourists is different in the different stages of the tourist's decision-making process. At each stage, the potential tourist may hold other images based on the amount of knowledge and experiences the tourist have within a place (Selby & Morgen, 1996). This range from an initial perception based on organic sources to a modified or re-evaluated image upon visiting the location (Gunn, 1972). This modification results in a much more realistic, objective, differentiated and complex image (Echtner & Brent, 1991). It can be argued that the image of residents living in a particular place is way more complicated than tourists visiting the area since the residents create more and more images due to their constant active involvement with the environment. These examples show that this line of study concerns itself with the residents' place image combined with the touristic perspective. Barely any literature is present on the place image of residents to impact their well-being positively.

### 2.1.2 Scale of place image

Place image can be applied to different levels of scale. On the national level, countries use place image to distinguish themselves from other nations. Often, place image on a national scale refers to nation-building (Kipnis, 2012). Kipnis (2012) explain that nation-building is a process where all activity, planned or not, increases the degree of commonality in lived experience and communicative practice among people who live in a particular country (Kipnis, 2012). This also includes, in high levels, the process of othering. People create paradigms on 'us' versus 'them' (Hogg, 2003). Such a kind of othering is very present in the case of a national football team. The rivalry with other nations legitimized the reality and perpetual upgrading of their own nation (Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002). Furthermore, the teams' national feeling is even more present because the players are from that country and cannot be bought by financially solid nations. Therefore, the national team is assumed to present the 'true' and 'real' national strengths (Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002). It is, therefore, a unique way of creating a positive place image among residents.

Another scale on which place image is studied is the regional scale (e.g. Ryan and Aicken, 2010; Rijnks and Strijker, 2014). A scholar on regional geography that has studied post-industrial areas in Europe is Hospers (e.g. 2009, 2010, 2011). His studies mainly focus on regions such as Ruhrgebiet in Germany or the Oresund region in Demark. Research suggested that a place like the Ruhrgebiet lacks a solid regional identity because central authorities did not want to concentrate the power in the Ruhr. This caused no city to claim to be the imaginable capital of the region. Consequently, the citizens' loyalty does not lie with the area as a whole but with their own municipality. Other research by Hospers (2006) indicates that many European regions try to out-compete each other in fear of being wiped off the map. Next, to the physical factors (such as buildings or infrastructure), invisible elements of a cognitive matter, i.e. the image of a region evoked in people's minds, have become increasingly relevant in the regional context (Hospers 2004). In this regional context, it becomes clear that the region is too big for citizens to lie their loyalty with, and a smaller scale needs to be taken into account in further research.

The third level of scale has focused on large cities globally (e.g. Anholt, 2006; Gilboa et al., 2015). Many capital and metropolitan cities have specific elements that differentiate them from others, such as the

canals in Amsterdam, the Berlin wall in Berlin or the Big Ben in London. This is also important for the imageability discussed by Kevin Lynch (1960) in his book, where he highlights the importance of physical landmarks in the city. According to Urry (1990) and Lynch (1960), a city needs to have clear 'signs' that can be gazed upon. In this way, an imageable city can be created. Without imageable and scenic features, it will be hard to communicate the image of a city. However, it is also argued that an over-investment in impressive buildings and significant events that can be gazed upon can create a blurry image (Hospers, 2005). An example of an extensive study of place image on the city level is the study of Anholt (2006). He studies well-known cities worldwide, such as Rio de Janeiro, Moscow and Mumbai, which all have clear signs that can be gazed upon.

To conclude, the above showed a lot of attention from scholars to large cities, regional areas and nations. However, very few studies have devoted their attention to small- and middle-sized destinations (Cassia et al., 2018). This scale represents a larger place than one city but smaller than the regional areas, such as Ruhrgebiet in Germany. Therefore, this study will focus on the municipal scale, including a small city and its rural surroundings. The study will primarily focus on a post-industrial municipality in the Netherlands. For these kinds of municipalities, the population decline is a constant struggle. Therefore, it is essential to monitor the image that residents have of their municipality to create a positive image and to maintain people in the area (Rijnks and Strijker, 2014). Furthermore, as explained above, from the regional studies, residents' loyalty often lie with their own city or municipality. Thus this study will focus on the municipal scale.

## 2.2 Retaining and attracting aspects

The article by Clouse and Dixit (2014) explains that place image can be divided into attraction and retention aspects. Whereas the attractions aspects refer to attracting new people to a particular place, the retention aspects refer to maintaining the residents or businesses already there. The main difference between the two is that retention aspects can only be experienced when one is physically present in a place (Clouse and Dixit, 2014). Therefore, the local professional football club, which is not a placeless organisation but only exists within a particular area and is embedded within this place, might play a role in retaining residents. The next part will focus on the local professional football club as a way to create a positive place image of residents to retain residents to the place.

## 2.3 Football as a retaining factor

Football clubs are not placeless organizations (Edensor and Millington, 2008). With their extensive networks with local and regional institutions, clubs have local roots and make material decisions that link or bind the football economy to a particular place (Edensor and Millington, 2008). A football team can be regarded as an icon or a representation of a specific place (van Houtum and van Dam, 2002). This also allows a football team, which is embedded in a particular location, to represent a specific location.  Literature suggests that there are different elements of the football club important to link or bind people to the club. A very prevalent feature associated with football clubs is the stadium, which represents the physical appearance of the club. Next to that, football is often associated with imagined communities in which supporters feel connected to each other. This refers to the social environment related to football. Furthermore, some cities instrumentalize, exploit, and often subsidize the local football club in the search for acknowledgement by others. This refers to the community services side, where governments also support clubs. Lastly, an essential element of football clubs is the

entertainment opportunities they provide during games, most present during derbies. The next part of this chapter will explain these different elements.

### 2.3.1 Stadium

The most powerful way to see that football is localized is through football stadiums. Professional football stadiums are regularly referred to as home. A football stadium is not just an open-air building but probably the most enduring symbol of the home team (Canter et al., 1989). The stadium is associated with people's fondest memories and may become a monument to supporters and landmarks to the local community (Charleston, 2008). This landmark can be, based on Lynch (1960), used to create a city image. However, this relation to the stadium is not only tangible but also intangible. The majority of supporters feel place attachment and feeling belongingness to the stadium (Charleston, 2008). A football club has roots in a specific location. Rootedness, explained by Tuan (1980, p6), is; "a deeply held association with a location, often accompanying a proudness in the place". This only occurs after a lengthy residence at a single location. A dislocation can stop this rootedness (Hauge and Mercer, 1998). The stadium can create geographical memories of people going to these stadiums regularly to support their team. A 'home' game can, for many residents and supporters, involve a collection of rituals. Furthermore, the stadium is more a home to supporters than to players. The playing and management personnel changes regularly, but supporters are there for decades (Hague and Mercer, 1998). Identifying with the football team expresses the wish to be recognized by the larger world. It is hoped and desired that the team's performances will provide the justified means to be proud of their own place (Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002). These embedded contexts suggest that while some (football) brands may be global fluids, most clubs' economic, social and cultural embeddedness are in local contexts (Edensor and Millington, 2008). The choice of a favourite club was because it was the local club or club of the city from which they originally resided. As such, the club can also represent a local community (Charleston, 2008).

### 2.3.2 Derbies

During games, two localities are competing against each other and are therefore set against each other. This is mainly the case with national football teams, which are constructed to represent the nation. The rivalry with another nation legitimizes the reality and perpetual upgrading of their own nation (Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002). This nationalism that can play a role on the national level is even more present because the players are all from the country and cannot be bought by financially solid nations. Therefore, the national team is assumed to represent the "true" and "real" national strength (Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002). Derbies are the most critical and emotional matches in the football season. More than any other game matches against the spatially near neighbour reproduce a territorial categorization that helps to identify the "we" in the territory. Giulainoti (2005) argued that this is also present within local football matches. In these games also the process of 'othering' takes place. Mainly because derbies are close and more easily assessable, the othering process is more present during these games (Davis, 2015).

### 2.3.3 Imaged communities

The theory by Anderson (1991) about imagined communities also adds to the notion that a strong imagination is needed. "When you buy a ticket for a football team, you are no longer a citizen, but you turn into a supporter" (Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002, p6). When you turn into a supporter, you are part of a bigger group, existing out of all the supporters of your team (Van Houtum and van Dam,

2002). This supporters crowd can be perceived as an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991). This community is made up of people who all have the same aim: supporting the football team. However, not all persons of the community know each other. Anderson's imagined community exists out of a group of people who self-identify as common people, even though most group members will never meet (Anderson, 1991). Especially the serial and competitive character of football seems to lend itself to the construction of imagined communities. The match is much more than just a game. It is an identity battle for honour, image and esteem of their own place (city/nation) for supporters. The stadium is sacred ground (van Houtum and van Dam, 2002). Sport makes the notions of 'community' or nation more tangible (Tuck and Maguire, 1999). Hauge and Mercer (1998) explain that when the Raith Rovers, a team from Kirkcaldy in Scotland, won an important match, people who did not know each other partied together on the streets. This celebration was not just for the few thousand regular attendees at the stadium; it was a party for the whole city. All these people were, at that moment, supporters of the team and created an imagined community together.

Another element of imagination is recognizing the stadium of a club as 'home' stadium. Here the 'home' matches are played, and the opposing team is the 'visitor' (Hauge and Mercer, 1998). This has been acknowledged not only by a football club's supporters but is also widely recognized by a broader group. In most sports, it is shown that the home stadium reflects the most intense local identification and pride (Bale, 1989). Here, a connection to the imageability can be made. This imageability can be created through the focus and the reproduction of images of physical structures (Lynch, 1960). A city with a football team and a football stadium might have a tangible, imaginable image that can be reproduced. Furthermore, the creation of imagined communities also appeals to people's imaginations.

## 2.4 Measurement of residents place image

The measurement of place image is diverse and complex because it greatly hinges upon the nature of the place under investigation (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Chen, Chung and Petrick, 2013). As a result, the list of attributes operationalizing place image has been wide-ranging and varied in the existing literature (Eg. Andrades-Caldito et al., 2013; Chen and Tsai, 2007). Examining residents' place in previous studies is often largely identical to studies focusing on tourists destination image (e.g. Beerli and e.g.tin, 2004; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Prayag, 2009). Those studies often mainly focus on the attractions and amenities present at a location. Therefore, these studies also neglect aspects such as accessibility and day-to-day services. Stylidis (2016) research tries to create a more holistic measurement of resident's place image by including community-specific attributes. Stylidis et al. (2016) distracted four categories that allow for a more holistic view of residents' place image by taking these elements into account. These are physical appearance, community services, social environment and entertainment opportunities. Depending on the study's primary subject and the context-specific features, these elements of the categories can vary from study to study (Styidis et al., 2016). These four categories advance the body of research on place image and serve as a promising framework for future research. The four elements will be discussed briefly below.

### 2.4.1 Physical appearance

The first category identified here is the physical appearance. The importance of physical appearance in explaining place image has been well documented in the tourism literature, noting that it is valued by both tourists and residents (Stylidis, 2016). Concerning local residents, Schroeder (1996) identified

'sightseeing' as a factor underpinning residents' place image. Physical attributes such as weather, architecture, and scenery significantly influence the city's population growth (Stylidis, 2016). Other literature suggests that local residents value the importance of an aesthetically appealing environment as it fosters their enjoyment of day-to-day activities (Schroeder, 1996).

### 2.4.2 Community services

Community service refers to community-related attributes identified as a contributing factor of local residents' impressions of their place (Grillo et al., 2010). The community service dimension consists of effective local government (e.g., McCrea et al., 2005; Sofranko and Fliegel, 1984), job opportunities (Sirgy et al., 2008; Turkoglu, 2015) and public transportation (Grzeskowiak et al., 2003). These elements are not always present in all the studies on place image, especially when considering the place image of tourists. Previous studies such as Henkel et al., 2006, Schroeder or Belhassen and Shani, 2015, have neglected this element and only focussed on the more tourists aspects of residents place image.

### 2.4.3 Social environment

The social environment focuses on the more intangible attributes of a place. The findings suggest that similar to tourists' place image, residents appreciate safety, friendly and a clean surrounding (Stylidis et al., 2016). The social environment attributes include the sense of safety, friendliness of locals and cleanness of the area (Stylidis, 2016). In the literature, there is no consensus on the importance of social environment compared to community service. Some scholars argue that the social environment is more critical in shaping residents' satisfaction of a place than community services (e.g. Filkins et al., 2000; Potter and Cantarero, 2006). Other studies show that community services are more important than the social environment for residents (Grzeskowiak et al., 2003; Sirgy et al., 2008). This might be due to the size of the city. Whereas more extensive areas are often more concerned with social elements such as friendly locals, the smaller regions see this as something obvious. They, therefore, do not attach much value to it (Stylidis et al., 2016).

### 2.4.4 Entertainment opportunities

Entertainment opportunities are somewhat affiliated with fun and enjoyment (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). The entertainment opportunities refer to nightlife activities, restaurants and shopping facilities offered by a specific place (Stylidis et al., 2016). But as with other elements as well, entertainment opportunities are different in each context and hinge upon the nature of the place (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Chen et al., 2013). As with social environment and community services, the importance of entertainment opportunities differs from study to study. Some studies have reported entertainment opportunities as a major dimension of place image (Chen and Tsai, 2007; Tasci and Holecek, 2007). Whereas in Stylidis (2016) case study, entertainment opportunities are less relevant for residents in their place image.

## 2.4.5 Previous studied attributes

**Table 1.** Place Attributes Used in the Measurement of Residents' Place Image.

| Image Attributes | Sternquist-Witter (1985) | Alhemoud and Armstrong (1996) | Schroeder (1996) | Henkel et al. (2006) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scenery | √ | | √ | |
| Cultural attractions | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Friendly locals | √ | | √ | √ |
| Entertainment/Nightlife | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Shopping facilities | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Restaurants/Food | √ | | √ | √ |
| Accommodation | √ | | √ | |
| Water sports | √ | | | |
| Golf and Tennis | √ | | √ | |
| Relaxation | √ | | | |
| Natural attractions | | √ | √ | √ |
| Historic sites/Museums | | √ | √ | √ |
| Cleanliness | | | √ | |
| Friends and relatives | | | √ | |
| Outdoor activities | | | √ | √ |
| Winter sports | | | √ | |
| Beaches | | | √ | √ |
| Sports activities | | | | √ |
| Exotic | | | | √ |
| Sex/Erotic tourism | | | | √ |
| Overall image | | | | |

*Figure 1: Place attributes used in the measurement of residents' place image*

Figure one shows a list of different attributes that have been used to measure the residents' place image (Stylidis et al., 2016). All of the attributes can be categorized in the four categories discussed above. In the list, multiple references are made to sports, which has been done in different studies. However, all these studies summarized in the above table all examine residents' place image in the context of tourism development. Sternquist-Witter (1985) examines the different attitudes of local businesses and tourists toward a resort. The article by Alhemoud and Armstrong (1996) discusses how college students perceive the city's tourist sights. Schroeder (1996), who included most of the image attributes shown in this table, examines how residents perceive the state as a tourist destination. Henkel et al. (2006) include sports activities in their study on how international visitors and Thai residents view Thailand as a tourist destination. In all these studies, the residents' place image is studied to understand the destination image from a tourism perspective. In contrast, in this study, residents' place image is examined without the notion of tourism.

The table shows that every study has had its own interpretation within the four elements discussed above. Therefore, this study will include elements directed from the local professional football club, such as the stadium and the role of the imagined communities discussed above.

## 2.4.6 Place image for different groups

The article by Zenker and Beckmann (2013) investigates place image for different groups within the city of Hamburg. In their study, they compare the place image of students and non-students of the city. Their results are that different groups look different to the place even though there are all residents of a particular area. This study has a specific focus on the local professional football club and will therefore also distinguish between two groups, supporters and non-supporters of the football club.

## 2.5 Conceptual model

The conceptual framework for residents' place image that will be used for the research can be found in Figure 2. The aspects discussed in the theoretical framework are included in the model. The model is primarily based on the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). The model starts with the residents' place image, which consist out of the four categories, physical appearance, social environment community services and entertainment opportunities. For place image, these categories are represented in the association with a place (Kotler, 1993) and the appreciation of different items (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990). As discussed above, place image of residents can be different for different groups. This is added in the last part of the model.
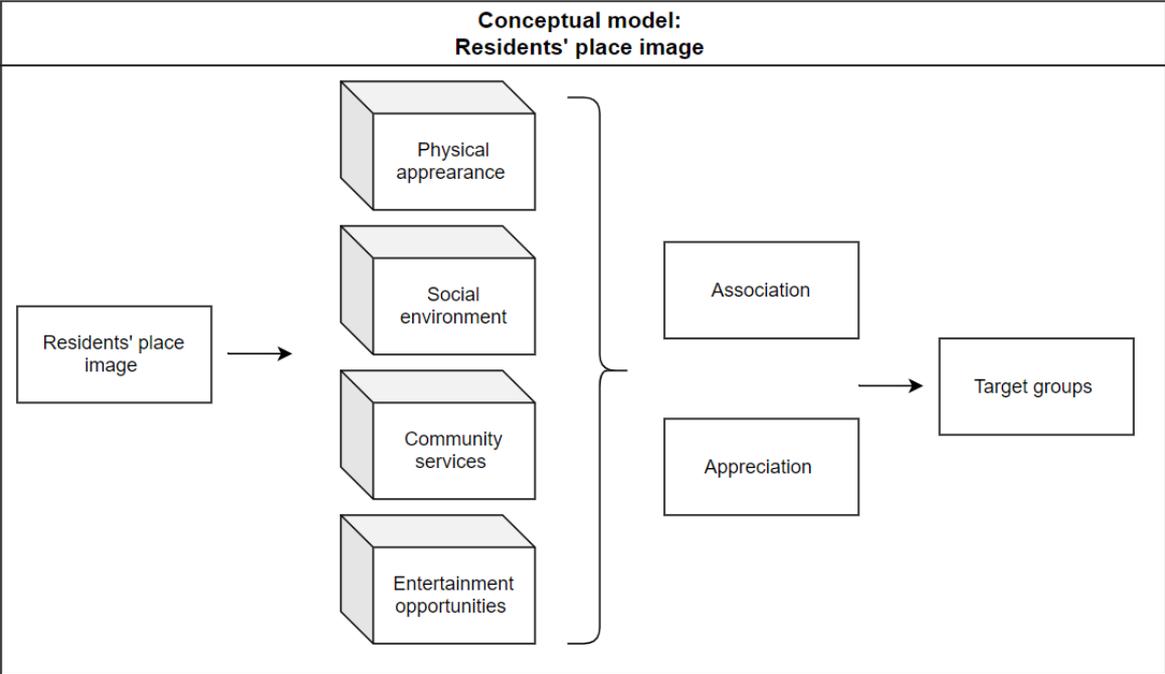


*Figure 2: Conceptual model of the study*

This study will have a specific focus on the impact of the local professional football club on the residents' place image. Therefore, within the boxes for physical appearance, social environment, community services and entertainment opportunities elements of the local professional football club are added, such as derbies and the stadium. Furthermore, the two groups that have a specific focus in this research are the supporters and non-supporters of the local professional football club. Together, these two groups represent the overall place image of the municipality of Emmen.

# 3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology of the research. The findings of the previous chapter will function as the foundation on which the empirical research is built. Clifford et al. (2016) explain that having a well-structured research design is needed to produce meaningful results. This chapter starts with a justification for the type of research chosen and will provide background information on the study area, the municipality of Emmen. Next to that, the reasons for a quantitative approach will be addressed. The following section will elaborate on the motives for conducting questionnaires, the way of collecting the questionnaires and the manner of analysing. The chapter will conclude by explaining the sample and the ethical considerations, including reflection upon the researcher's positionality.

## 3.1 Case study research

Case study research was chosen because it allows for gaining a deeper insight into the impact FC Emmen has on Emmen's residents' place image. A case study is a form of research where the case is studied in its everyday context (Krusenvik, 2016). It fits studies that aim to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon in a particular context, in this case, to gain a better understanding of the impact of the local professional football club on the residents' place image. However, there are certain drawbacks associated with the use of case studies. One of the drawbacks is that it cannot provide insights into causality and general conditions (Lindvall, 2007). Therefore, the purpose of the case study is not to generalize but to get a complete picture of a situation (Jacobsen, 2002 in Krusenvik, 2016). In case studies, the focus is on one particular unit, which can be an individual, group or local community (Krusenvik, 2016). The use of case study research is suitable when we want to understand the interaction between a specific context and a phenomenon (Jacobson, 2002). In this case study, the interaction between the residents' place image of the municipality of Emmen and the local professional football club is examined.

### 3.1.1 Study area

The municipality of Emmen has been struggling with population decline and its image over the last couple of years. The municipality consists of a medium-sized city and is located in the Northern part of the Netherlands (Figure 3). Within the Dutch spatial debate, there is little attention for the role and the position of these middle-sized areas. These areas do not have the advantages and opportunities that arise in metropolitan areas and are struggling with their socio-economic situation. Furthermore, these medium-sized places often struggle with their image towards the future (Dagevos et al., 2014; Zoeteman et al., 2015; Sheikh, 2015). Emmen's negative reputation is also present in the Atlas voor Gemeenten (2019), where it is portrayed as one of the least favourite municipalities to live in in the Netherlands.

That Emmen is not an attractive municipality to live in also shows when looking at the demographics of the municipality. Emmen is one of the municipalities that experience population decline. Many young people leave the area, and older people stay, which causes an ageing population (Trendbureau Drenthe, 2019). This trend had already started in 2012. The most urbanized regions in the Netherlands, such as the Randstad area, will continue to grow, putting pressure on peripheral regions. If current decline developments continue, the gap between the two regions will widen (Bontje and Musterd, 2012). Next to that, Emmen is listed as an 'anticipeer' area by the national government, which indicates that it will face population decline in the upcoming years (Rijksoverheid, 2020). Hence, one could argue

that areas must focus on retaining the citizens who are already there to limit the region's population decline.

Emmen is located in the northern part of the Netherlands and can be seen as a rural municipality. The municipality has approximately 100.000 inhabitants and consists of one city with 13 villages. Since half of the population lives in the city and the other half in the villages surrounding the city, this study will focus on the municipality to gain a broad overview of the role of FC Emmen within the municipality. Moreover, the whole municipality is facing population decline, and the local professional football club does not only represent the city but the entire municipality. Therefore, the focus of the study will go beyond the city and will take into account the city and the villages.

The city of Emmen is mainly known for the Zoo, called 'Wildlands'. Next to that, the city of Emmen has a local professional football team currently (moment of writing March 2021) represented in the highest football league in the Netherlands. FC Emmen has played from 1984 onwards as a professional football club (FC Emmen, 2021). Currently, it is the only professional football club in the province. This thesis will focus on FC Emmen and investigates what impact the club has on the place images of residents of the municipality of Emmen.
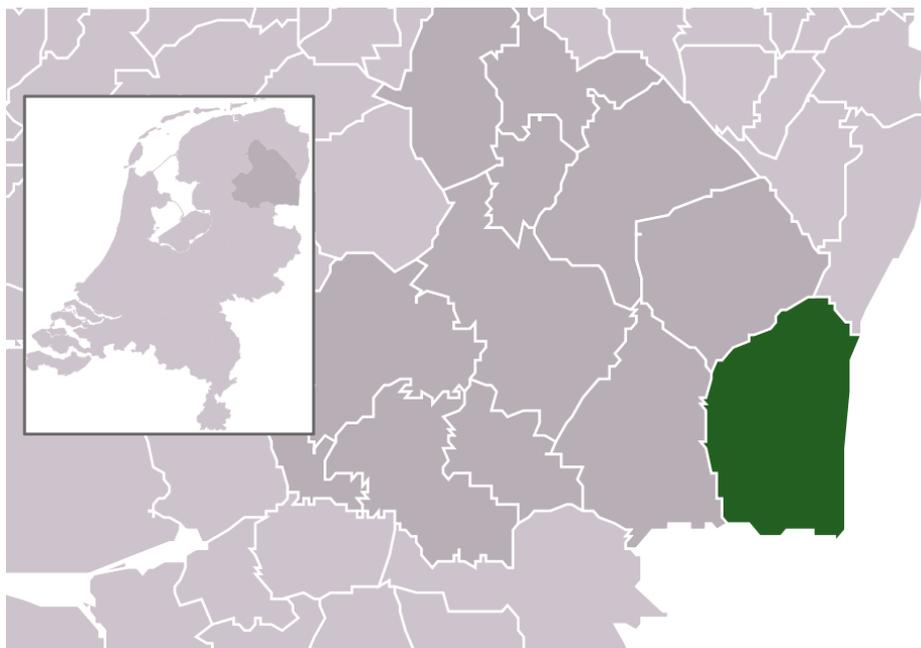


*Figure 3: geographical location of case study: municipality of Emmen*

## 3.2 Quantitative approach

To provide an answer to the research question: *"What is the impact of a local professional football club, FC Emmen, on the place image of residents of the municipality of Emmen?",* quantitative research approach has been chosen. Collecting a questionnaire is a common way of conducting quantitative research (Ray, 2016). Many researchers have used questionnaires to examine place image, both for residents and tourists (e.g. Stylidis 2014; 2016). Questionnaires are useful for gathering original data about people and their behaviour, experiences and social interactions (McLafferty 2010; Parfitt, 2005). The use of quantitative case studies is a well-established approach in geography to determine the image of a place. The literature review of Peng et al. (2020) on sense of place and place identity, including studies on place image, shows that a questionnaire is a frequently used way of measuring concepts such as place image.

Furthermore, a commonly used approach to measure the relationship people have with a specific place, whether it is place image, place identity or place dependency, contains Likert scale questions (Peng et al., 2020; Hammitt et al., 2006; Kyle et al., 2004; Cleave et al., 2017). For this research, a questionnaire is carried out with five-point Likert scale questions to measure the appreciation of Emmen's place image of residents. Respondents also had the option: 'I don't know/not applicable. These answers are where not taken into account for further analysis. The questions asked in the questionnaire are based on the study of Stylidis et al. (2016). That study shows that place image can be measured by examining appreciation of the physical appearance, social environment, community services and entertainment opportunity services, as discussed in the theoretical framework. Next to the Likert scale questions that measures appreciation, the questionnaire starts with an open question on place image based on the study of Zenker and Beckmann (2013). They explain that place image can be measured based on top-of-mind associations of respondents. For this study, the three top-of-mind associations of residents have been collected. Since the questionnaire included an open question, part of the data will be qualitative as well.

## 3.2.1 Justification of the questionnaire guide

The questions for the questionnaire are made based on the theoretical framework and conceptual model discussed in chapter two. The questionnaire started with an open question based on the method of Zenker and Beckmann (2013) on the top-of-mind associations. In this question respondents were asked to fill in the three words they would think of first when they would hear Emmen. Next to that, questions were formulated about the appreciation of the overall image that people have of their area. The appreciation is measured for the municipality's physical appearance, community services, social environment, and entertainment opportunities. These 13 questions are based on the study of Stylidis et al. (2016). Furthermore, football-related elements will be added to the questionnaire. These questions do also fit in to the four categories central in this thesis. Besides that, to make a difference in the data between supporters and non-supporters a question is include where being a supporter or not is self-defined by the respondent. Based on this question the division between supporters and non-supporter is made in this research. Additionally, the questionnaire also includes extra questions based on the characteristics the respondents such as owning a seasonal ticket and the presence at games or activities of the football club. This is done to gain insight into the objective characteristics of supporters compared to the subjective self-defined question.

The questionnaire will conclude with some control questions based on the general information of the participants, such as age, gender and zip code. The results will be used to understand how the sample represents the population and can be used to compare different groups with each other (Punch, 2013). A broader explanation of every question in the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

### 3.2.3 Data collection

An online questionnaire was conducted for this research, which was created in Qualtrics. The questionnaire was spread online via Facebook and WhatsApp. The link to the questions was accompanied with a message where it was specified that only people currently living in the municipality of Emmen could participate in the study. By doing this, the chances that people who are not part of the research group, residents of the municipality of Emmen, would be lower. The questionnaire was first distributed on the Facebook page of the researcher and thereafter via WhatsApp, among acquaintances of the researcher who lived in Emmen. When spreading the questionnaire, a message was accompanied to send it to other people living in the municipality. This method is called snowballing sampling (Valentine, in Clifford et al., 2010). This method has proven to be effective in this study. Through this way of sampling 275 respondents filled in the questionnaire. From the 275 respondents, 73 were excluded for not completing the questionnaire. Furthermore, four more respondents were excluded because they did not meet the criterion living in the municipality of Emmen, which was checked by the zip code. The data collection started on May 10th 2021 and ended on May 17th 2021. Due to covid-19, data collection was limited to online methods. The questionnaire was created in Dutch. This was done for the sake of the respondents, who were all living in a Dutch municipality. Therefore, it is assumed that most people would be able to participate in the study.

### 3.2.4 Analysing the questionnaire

To explore the residents' place image of Emmen and the impact of local professional football club on the place image of the inhabitants of Emmen, several analyses were conducted. First of all, the qualitative data from the open question about top-of-mind associations were analysed. This was done by examining the frequencies of these associations mentioned. These results were analysed using the program Atlas.Ti. In this program, word clouds were made to show differences between different groups. Examining the top-of-mind associations consisted of two rounds. First, a list was created based on the single top-of-mind associations. The second round included categorizing associations in groups based on the four categories discussed in theory; physical appearance, social environment, community services, and entertainment opportunities. A decision tree for this categorization is provided in Figure 5.
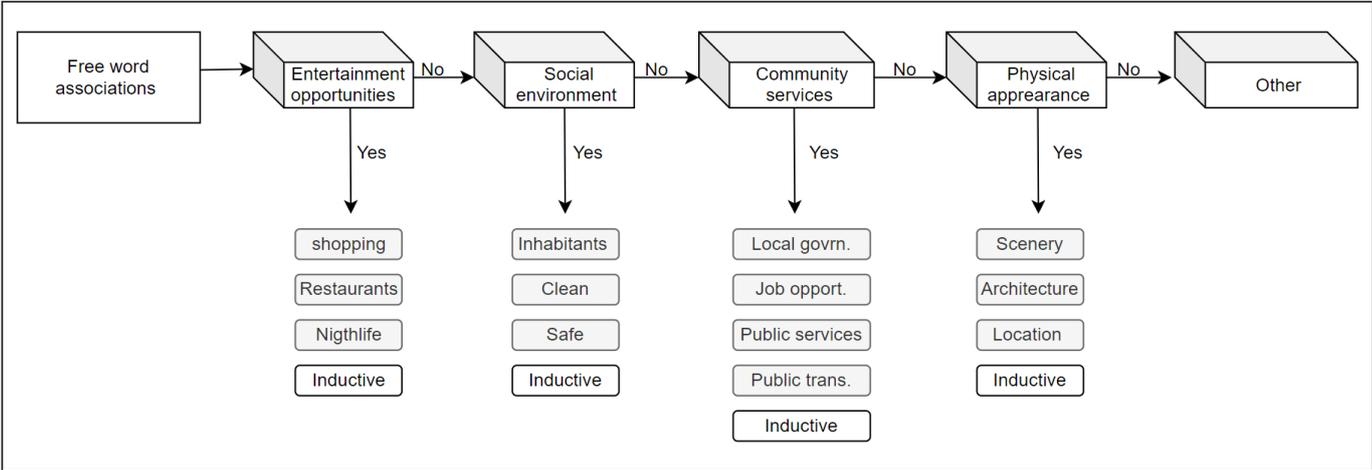


*Figure 5: Decision tree for clustered associations*

The decision tree starts with the entertainment opportunities, social environment, and community services and ends with physical appearance. This order is chosen due to the possible overlap between different categories. Most entertainment opportunities exist within a specific physical place, and you visit them with other people. An example is a theatre. A theatre is a physical place where people, often together with others, watch a performance. Therefore, it might be possible to position the theatre in three categories; physical appearance, social environment and entertainment opportunities. However, the foremost reasons for going to the theatre is watching a performance and be entertained. Therefore, the decision tree starts with the entertainment opportunities and ends with physical appearance. This is due to the fact that the physical appearance is not the most crucial element of most associations.

Next, the quantitative data will be analysed through descriptive statistics. The mean and the mode of the answers will be calculated to understand the appreciation of the physical appearance, social environment, entertainment opportunities and community services. Next to that, independent sample t-tests are conducted to statistically measure the difference between the appreciation of the four items between supporters and non-supporters. A supporter is a self-defined element, which respondents had to define by themselves in the questionnaire. The tests are done with a significance level of 90% and 95% due to the small difference in the means of the elements under investigation.

## 3.3 Respondents

The respondents of this study are a representation of the population of the municipality of Emmen. As seen from Table 1, there is a bias towards female respondents in the dataset. Residents age 51 to 60 and older than 60 represent the largest group in the sample, which is in accordance with the population. The age group 16 to 30 is slightly overrepresented in the sample, and the group 31 to 40 is underrepresented. Most of the respondents were long-time residents and indicated that they have lived in Emmen for over 20 years. The majority of the respondents live in the city rather than the countryside.

*Table 1: Demographic characteristics*

| DEMOGRAPHIC | SAMPLE (N=198) | | POPULATION (MUNICIPALITY EMMEN) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| GENDER | Male | 30,8% | Male | 49,8% |
| | Female | 67,7% | Female | 50,2% |
| AGE GROUP | 16-30 | 28,6% | 16-30 | 16,6% |
| | 31- 40 | 5,1% | 31-40 | 10,5% |
| | 41 – 50 | 12,6% | 41 – 50 | 12,2% |
| | 51 – 60 | 34,5% | 51 – 60 | 15,8% |
| | 60 + | 18,7% | 60+ = | 30,7% |
| LENGTH OF RESIDENCY (YEARS) | 2- 5 years | 1,5% | NA | |
| | 6 – 10 years | 1,5% | | |
| | 11 – 20 years | 12,6% | | |
| | More than 20 years | 81,8% | | |
| URBAN/RURAL | City/sub-urban | 64,9% | City/sub-urban* | 52,8% |
| | Rural | 35,1% | Rural | 47,2% |

* Source CBS, 2020

## 3.4 Ethical considerations

There are a few elements to be considered while conducting research that relate to ethical considerations. Ray (2016) explains that when working with questionnaires online, challenges are

posed regarding the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents. Using online questionnaires brings confidentiality to the force since online questionnaires are often conducted using commercial software and web hosting services, which means that the researcher does not have complete control over protecting the participant's identities (Ray, 2016). This study makes use of the computer programme Qualtrics. Qualtrics is a computer programme that the University of Groningen uses as a data collection method. The log-in of the programme is connected to the university of Groningen system. Therefore, the data is stored behind the private window of the university. Furthermore, the University of Groningen has a processing agreement with Qualtrics, in which it has been agreed that Qualtrics will not view, move or share the data (RUG, 2020). Moreover, the questionnaire is anonymous, and respondents cannot be identified based on the data collected. In the programme Qualtrics, it is possible to exclude the respondents' personal information, such as IP Address from the data collected. Therefore, a higher level of anonymity can be ensured for the respondents. Additionally, the researcher's email address was also communicated at the beginning of the questionnaire, allowing respondents to contact the researcher with any questions or concerns about the study.

Next to that, research can be classified as a social process, which can have several implications (Dowling et al., 2016). It is essential as a researcher to be aware of these implications when conducting research. It is not possible to entirely separate research, researcher and society. Therefore, it is crucial to keep this interchangeability between the three elements in mind. An essential part that must be considered is the positionality statement of the researcher regarding the subject. Positionality describes an individual's worldview and their position within the research (Holmes, 2020). It is vital for the researcher to explicitly locate themselves in the context of the project and acknowledge from the start why the issue is selected and what the initial ideas about the topic were (Ray, 2016). For this research, it is essential to know that the researcher has grown up in Emmen, making the researcher an insider to the community (Holmes, 2020). Therefore, the geographical location of the research was known by the researcher. The main advantage of an insider position is that the researcher has easier access to the culture being studied (Sanghera & Bjokert, 2008). However, disadvantages are that obvious questions, which an outsider may legitimately ask, may not be asked (Naaek et al., 2010) or that sensitive information that respondents would share with an outsider is not shared with an insider (Holmes, 2020). These disadvantages are taken into account by choices made in the method. First of all, the questions in the questionnaire are based on previous studies and therefore are not adjusted to the researchers' knowledge, which can counter the first disadvantage. Next to that, by letting the respondents know that the data will be anonymized, the second disadvantage has also been tried to minimize.

# 4. Results

This chapter discusses the data which was collected and analysed as described in the previous chapter. The results will revolve around the two parts of the questionnaire, the top-of-mind associations and the appreciation of place image. Furthermore, the differences and similarities in place image between supporters of the local professional football club and non-supporter will be shared. This will also include the football-related elements per category.

## 4.1 Top-of-mind associations

The first sub-question of the study focuses on the top-of-mind associations residents of Emmen have with their municipality. The open question: "What are your first three associations with Emmen" has been asked in the questionnaire. Figure 5 shows a word cloud of all the top-of-mind associations named by respondents. How bigger the word is written, how more often it is mentioned by the respondents. These results show that the zoo is named most often with references to 'Dierentuin' and 'Wildlands'. Furthermore, it is also visible that the local professional football club, FC Emmen, is also named frequently in third place. Table 2 shows the same results ordered in a top 10 based on the frequency.



*Figure 4: Word cloud including all the top-of-mind associations mentioned (N=192)*

Table 2: Top 10 top-of-mind associations complete sample (n = 192)

| #  | Top-of-mind association | Frequency |
|----|-------------------------|-----------|
| #1 | *Zoo*                   | 47x       |
| #2 | *Wildlands*             | 46x       |
| #3 | *FC Emmen*              | 39x       |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| #4 | Green | 27x |
| #5 | Cosy | 20x |
| #6 | Quite | 17x |
| #7 | Spacious | 10x |
| #7 | *Atlas (theatre)* | 10x |
| #9 | Boring | 9x |
| #10 | Safe | 7x |

Noticeable in table 2 are the unique top-of-mind associations with attractions and adjectives. The attractions *(in italics)* refer to the zoo, the local professional football club and the local theatre. The adjectives consist of the remaining top-of-mind associations: 'green,' 'cozy', 'quite', 'spacious', 'boring', and 'safe'.

The next step is analysing the clustered top-of-mind associations based on the predefined categories of the quantitative analysis of residents' place image. These are physical appearance, social environment, community services and entertainment opportunities. The decision tree for this selection can be found in the method. The comprehensive list of the top-of-mind associations per category can be found in appendix two.

*Table 3: Top-of-mind associations based on the predefined categories*

| | Frequencies |
|---|---|
| **Entertainment opportunities** | 186 |
| **Physical appearances** | 173 |
| **Social environment** | 126 |
| **Community services** | 31 |

Table 3 shows the top-of-mind associations that are clustered into the predefined categories of the quantitative study. What stands out in the table is that the most outstanding top-of-mind associations that residents of Emmen have are related to physical appearance and entertainment opportunities. The least focus is put on the community services. The social environment, focussing on the social side

of the city is referred to 126 times. This is mainly focused on the atmosphere and the friendliness of people.



*Figure 5: Word clouds predefined top-of-mind associations. A: Entertainment opportunities, B: Community services, C: Physical appearance, D: social environment.*

Figure 6 shows the word clouds of the top-of-mind associations divided between the four cateogries. This figure shows that the associations for entertianmnet opportutnies (A) are mainly devided between the Zoo and the football club. Community services (B) refer most to the expensiveness of the municipaltiy. The physcial appprearance (C) refers mostly to the green area and the natural elements, and the social environment (D) is focused on the athomosphere of cozyness, quiet and boring, in combination with being 'at home'. Detailed results of the top-of-mind associations will be discussed together with the data on appreciation in the next part.

## 4.2 Appreciation

The next part will look at the quantitative data based on the Likert scale questions. The different categories: physical appearance, social environment, community services and entertainment opportunities, are set apart to measure the appreciation of residents of the municipality. This will also include connections to the top-of-mind associations previously discussed.

### 4.2.1 Physical appearance

First, an analysis of the appreciation of physical appearance will be presented. This element includes the natural surroundings, the architecture and buildings and the geographical location as explained in the theoretical framework. Respondents could agree or disagree with the statement on a five point-Likert scale. All statements are formed in a positive manner, such as: "*Emmen has nice architecture/buildings*". Table 4 shows the results, including the N, mean and mode.

Table 4: Results appreciation physical appearance

|  | Scenery | Architecture | Location | Overall physical appearance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | 195 | 193 | 195 | 196 |
| Mean | 4.04 | 2,83 | 2,74 | 3,21 |
| Mode | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3,00 |

The respondents appreciate the attractive scenery most (mean = 4,04). This is also visible in the mode of four, which represents 'agree'. That the scenery is an important element of the municipality of Emmen is also visible in the top-of-mind associations. Out of the 173 top-of-mind associations with the physical appearance, 97 times a reference is made concerning the scenery. Most frequency named at the scenery is "Spacious" and "Green" (see also Table 2 and the Appendix).

Results of the statement: "*Emmen has beautiful architecture and buildings"* indicate that respondents are less appreciative about the architecture and buildings in Emmen than the scenery. A mode of three shows that respondents do not agree or disagree with the statement but are neutral. This is also visible in the top-of-mind associations, where 97 references are made regarding the scenery and just 35 about the municipality's architecture. Next to that, interesting is that most of the top-of-mind associations made regarding the architecture are focussed on the city centre of Emmen, with 15 referring to the 'centre of Emmen' and 12 referring to the 'main square'. These are both new elements in the city centre of Emmen and refer therefore mainly modern elements. This is also visible in the qualitative data, where comments are made towards 'modern' but also 'lacks history'. These are both negative and positive associations about the same element. This shows that not everybody appreciates the recent and modern developments in the municipality.

Results also indicate that respondents least appreciate the location of the municipality within the Netherlands. With a mean of 2,74 and a mode of two (disagree), respondents do not feel satisfied with the location of Emmen within the Netherlands. This result is not visible in the results of the qualitative data. The references to the geographical location are mainly focused on the large size of the municipality (named eleven times), and the different neighbourhoods and villages of Emmen are named five times. However, three times the top-of-mind association "Far corner" is mentioned, which refers to the location of Emmen in the Netherlands at the far corners of the country.

Overall, the appreciation of the physical appearance, the scenery, architecture and location combined is 3,21. This is between being neutral and agreeing with the statements, with a bias towards neutrality.

### 4.2.2 Community service
The second element of place image are the community services which are present within the municipality. This contains out of effective local government, public services, job opportunities and public transport. The data for community services can be found in Table 5.

Table 5: Results appreciation community services

|  | Effective local government | Good public services | Good job opportunities | Good public transport | Overall community services |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N valid | 165 | 192 | 184 | 183 | 196 |
| Mean | 2,96 | 3,52 | 2,96 | 3,32 | 3,23 |
| Mode | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3,00 |

In the qualitative data, the role of the local government is argued extensively, especially in a negative manner, where respondents are critical of the spending of communal money and the weak performance of the board. This is also visible in the appreciation of the local government with a mean of 2,96.

The mean and mode for job opportunities are comparable to the ones of local government with a mean of 2,96 and a mode of three. Job opportunities are not something that is mentioned at the top-of-mind associations. Only two references made to the industry-city and three people indicate that Emmen is where they work.

Results also indicate that respondents appreciate public services more than the local government. This is in line with the top-of-mind associations that indicate that the most criticism is on the municipal board and their waste of money into different projects, rather than on the public services in the municipality. Public services score a mean of 3,52 and a mode of four. This shows that respondents are satisfied with the public services in the municipality of Emmen. Public services do not play a role within the top-of-mind associations.

Lastly, most respondents agreed with the statement *"Emmen has good public transport"* and therefore appreciate public transport in the municipality. This mode is similar to the mode of public services. However, the mean of public transport is relatively lower than the mean for the public services. This is due to the higher number of negative answers to the public transport question. Only 15,6% of the respondents disagreed or completely disagreed with the statement on public services, and 25% of the respondents completely disagreed/disagreed with the statement on public transportation. No references are made regarding the public transport the in the top-of-mind associations.

Overall, the mean of the community services, which are local government, job opportunities, public services and public transportation combined, is 3,32. This is between being neutral and agreeing, with a bias towards neutrality. This is also visible in the mode of three (neutral). These results are comparable with the results for physical appearance (mean = 3,21 and mode = three).

### 4.2.3 Social environment
The third category discussed is the social environment which consists out of a social, clean and safe environment. Table 6 shows the results.

Table 6: Results appreciation social environment

|  | Clean environment | Safe environment | Friendliness inhabitants | Overall social environment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N valid | 192 | 190 | 195 | 196 |
| Mean | 3,73 | 3,78 | 4,07 | 3,85 |
| Mode | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

Standing out for this category is that the mode for all the elements is four. This means that with all the statements, most people answered that they agreed with the statement. This is also visible in the means of all the elements, which are all above 3,5. Compared with the physical appearance and the community services, people are overall more appreciative about the social environment.

The highest mean is for the statement: *"Emmen has friendly inhabitants"*. Overall, this is the highest mean of all (mean = 4,07). This shows that residents appreciate the friendly inhabitants most of the social environment. Next to that, the range of answers is also smaller for this question than previously discussed questions. The frequency for answering 'completely disagree' is zero. This means that zero respondents responded 'completely disagree'. This was not the case with the previously discussed categories, physical appearance and community services, where all five opinions of the Likert scale were given at least once. The friendliness of inhabitants also showed itself in the top-of-mind associations, where associations such as 'hospitable' and 'spontaneous people' were named.

The statement: *"Emmen is a safe place"* is also answered positively. With the category 'completely disagree' missing in the answers. The mean is just slightly lower than the mean of friendliness of inhabitants with a mean = 3,78. The mode is four, which indicates that most respondents agreed with the statement. The municipality's safety is also quite present in the qualitative results, with 'safe' in the top ten of non-clustered top-of-mind associations and named in total seven times in the qualitative part.

The least positive are respondents about the cleanness of their environment, with a mean of 3,73. The difference between the three elements is relatively small, and also indicated by the mode of 4. However, the clean environment is only named two times in the top-of-mind associations and is not a large share of the qualitative study.

These high means and modes on the individual elements are also visible in the results of the overall social environment, where the mean is 3,85, and the mode is 4.

### 4.2.4 Entertainment opportunities

The fourth category discussed is the appreciation of the entertainment opportunities. This consists of the opportunities in the municipality to spend free time. These include good restaurants, nightlife and shopping opportunities. Table 7 shows the results for entertainment opportunities.

Table 7: Results appreciation entertainment opportunities

|  | Good restaurants | Good nightlife | Good place to shop | Overall entertainment opportunities |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N valid | 192 | 179 | 195 | 196 |
| Mean | 3,98 | 2,62 | 3,64 | 3,44 |
| Median | 4,08 | 2,55 | 3,71 | 3,49 |
| Mode | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3,67 |

Respondents are most appreciative of the restaurants that are available in Emmen. The mode for this element is a four, which represents 'agree'. This is also slightly visible in the qualitative data, where about six times a restaurant was mentioned by the respondents ('Wollegras' and 'Brasserie'). Furthermore, references are made towards eating and eating out in the top-of-mind associations. The mean is relatively high, with a number of 3,98.

Next to that, people are also quite positive about the shopping facilities present in Emmen. The most given answer is 'agree' (four). This might be due to the fact that Emmen is the second largest shopping city in the North of the Netherlands. The mean for shopping is 3,64. That shopping is an important element of the municipality is also visible in the top-of-mind associations. Six times a reference is made towards the public market on Friday and in the summer. Furthermore, also six times a top-of-mind association is made concerning the general shopping facilities, by stating 'shopping' or 'shops'.

The least appreciative are respondents about the nightlife present in the municipality. With a mode of two, the most given answer is 'disagree' for the statement: *"Emmen has a vibrant nightlife".* This is also visible in the mean of just 2,55. It is in accordance with the qualitative part of the study, where only two times a reference is made to the 'Zwetser', which is a bar in Emmen.

Overall, people agree with most statements and rate the entertainment opportunities in a more positive manner than the physical appearance and community services. However, the social environment is something that they are more positive about. The mean of entertainment opportunities is 3,44 and the mode 3,67.

### 4.2.5 Overall residents' place image

Table 8 shows an overview of the results discussed above. It includes the list of all the elements, its mean and mode and the category it belong to.

Table 8: Elements ranked based on mean

| # |  | Mean | Mode | Category |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Friendly inhabitants | 4,07 | 4 | Social |
| 2 | Attractive scenery | 4,04 | 4 | Physical |

| 3 | Good restaurants | 3,98 | 4 | Entertainment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Safe environment | 3,78 | 4 | Social |
| 5 | Clean environment | 3,73 | 4 | Social |
| 6 | Good place to shop | 3,64 | 4 | Entertainment |
| 7 | Good public services | 3,52 | 4 | Community |
| 8 | Good public transport | 3,32 | 4 | Community |
| 9 | Effective local politics | 2,96 | 3 | Community |
| 10 | Good job opportunities | 2,96 | 3 | Community |
| 11 | Nice architecture | 2,83 | 3 | Physical |
| 12 | Location in Netherlands | 2,74 | 2 | Physical |
| 13 | Good nightlife | 2,62 | 2 | Entertainment |

As presented in Table 8, the three elements of social environment are listed in the top five, with friendly inhabitants on one and a safe and clean environment on four and five. However, the attractive scenery is also highly appreciated with a mean higher than four. The two other elements of the physical appearance are second-and third-last, with modes of tree and two. Most negative are people about the nightlife in the municipality of Emmen, with a mode of two and a mean of 2,62. Of the entertainment opportunities, the restaurants score high as well as the shopping facilities.

*Table 9: Elements ranked based on time mentioned in the top-of-mind associations*

| # | | Frequency | Category |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Attractive scenery | 97x | Physical |
| 2 | Nice architecture | 35x | Physical |
| 3 | Location in Netherlands | 30x | Physical |
| 4 | Local government | 24x | Community |
| 5 | Friendly inhabitants | 15x | Social |
| 6 | Good restaurants | 14x | Entertainment |
| 7 | Good place to shop | 11x | Entertainment |
| 8 | Clean environment | 7x | Social |
| 9 | Good job opportunities | 5x | Community |
| 10 | Safe environment | 2x | Social |
| 11 | Good nightlife | 2x | Entertainment |

| 12 | Good public services | 1x | Community |
|----|----------------------|----|-----------|
| 13 | Good public transport | 0x | Community |

The results of the top-of-mind associations, presented in Table 9, shows a different image than the appreciation analysis of Table 8. Whereas the top-of-mind associations most often refer to the physical appearance, the appreciation analysis of the quantitative data shows a more diverse image. This image is more diverse with highest appreciation shows on the friendly inhabitants, attractive scenery and good restaurants. These belong to the categories; physical appearance, the social environment and the entertainment opportunities.

Furthermore, Table 10 shows the general residents' place image of Emmen. The general residents place image is the mean of all the statements discussed above together. The mean of this variable is 3,44. Respondents generally displayed a favourable image of Emmen, with an overall mean score over three (mean = 3,44). Particularly, respondents appreciated Emmen's friendly inhabitants, attractive scenery, good restaurants and a safe and clean environment. In contrast, the availability of job opportunities, the architecture, the location with regard to the Netherlands and the nightlife were perceived in the least favourable. More positive are respondents on the social environment, then the entertainment opportunities and then the community services. Physical appearance is ranked last with a means of 3,21.

Table 10: Overall residents place image and categories

|  | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|------|----------------|
| **Residents place image** | **3,44** | **0,51** |
| Physical appearance | 3,21 | 0,74 |
| Community services | 3,23 | 0,69 |
| Entertainment opportunities | 3,44 | 0,71 |
| Social environment | 3,85 | 0,61 |

## 4.3 Comparison between residents' place image among supporter and non-supporters of the local professional football club

The next part will look into the differences and similarities between supporters and non-supporters of the local professional football club regarding place image. First of all, it will be operationalized what a supporter is. Based on the literature, a supporter is attending games, and somebody follows the team in de media and feels attached to the club. These three elements are also questions in the questionnaire. However, the answers differ slightly from the literature.

### 4.3.1 Descriptive of being a supporter

First of all, a question is added to the questionnaire: "Do you feel like you are a supporter of FC Emmen" where respondents had to indicate for themselves if they were a supporter or not. Therefore, this question refers to the self-defined categorization by the respondent. The questionnaire is filled in by 112 supporters of the football club and 84 non-supporters (N=196). Most supporters in the sample are female compared to being male (Table 11), and most supporters in the sample are between 51 and 60 years and 21 and 30 years. These are also the biggest group in de data. Next to that, most supporters live for more than 20 years in the municipality.

Table 11: Demographics supporters/non-supporters

|  |  | N Supporters | % | N Non-supporters | % |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Age** | 16-20 | 5 | 2,6% | 2 | 1% | 7 | 3,6% |
|  | 21-30 | 32 | 16,4% | 17 | 8,7% | 49 | 25,1% |
|  | 31-40 | 7 | 3,6% | 3 | 1,5% | 10 | 5,1% |
|  | 41-50 | 12 | 6,2% | 12 | 6,2% | 24 | 12,4% |
|  | 51-60 | 39 | 20% | 29 | 14,9% | 68 | 34,9% |
|  | 60+ | 17 | 8,7% | 20 | 10,3% | 37 | 19% |
|  | **Total:** | **112** | **57,4%** | **83** | **42,6%** | **195** | **100%** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Gender** | Female | 68 | 35,1% | 65 | 33,5% | 133 | 86,6% |
|  | Male | 43 | 22,2% | 18 | 9,2% | 61 | 31,4% |
|  |  | **111** | **57,2%** | **83** | **42,8%** | **194** | **100%** |
| **Time lived in Emmen** | 2-5 years | 1 | 0,5% | 2 | 1,0% | 3 | 1,5% |
|  | 6-10 years | 2 | 1,0% | 1 | 0,5% | 3 | 1,5% |
|  | 11 - 20 years | 12 | 6,3% | 12 | 6,3% | 24 | 12,6% |
|  | 20+ | 96 | 50% | 66 | 34,4% | 162 | 84,4% |
|  |  | **111** | **57,8%** | **81** | **42,2%** | **192** | **100%** |

### 4.3.2. Supporters and non-supporters

This study is interested in what differentiates a supporter from a non-supporter. Table 12 shows the results of whether respondents own a seasonal ticket, if they are present at events or games and if they follow the club in the media to see which kind of characteristic the self-defined supporters conduct.

*Table 12: characteristics supporters and non-supporters*

|  |  | Supporter | % | Non-supporter | % | total | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Seasonal ticket** | Yes | 23 | 11,8% | 0 | 0% | 23 | 11,8% |
|  | No | 88 | 45,1% | 84 | 43,1% | 172 | 88,2% |
|  |  | **111** | **56,9%** | **84** | **43,1%** | **195** | **100%** |
| **Present at activity** | Yes | 99 | 50,5% | 29 | 14,8% | 128 | 65,3% |
|  | No | 13 | 6,6% | 55 | 28,1% | 68 | 34,7% |
|  |  | **112** | **57,1%** | **84** | **42,9%** | **196** | **100%** |
| **Follow FC Emmen in media** | Completely disagree | 0 | 0% | 15 | 7,7% | 15 | 7,7% |
|  | Disagree | 1 | 0,5% | 15 | 7,7% | 16 | 8,2% |
|  | Neutral | 2 | 1,0% | 23 | 11,7% | 25 | 12,7% |
|  | Agree | 62 | 31,6% | 30 | 15,3% | 92 | 46,9% |
|  | Completely agree | 47 | 24,0% | 1 | 0,5% | 48 | 24,5% |
|  |  | **112** | **57,1%** | **84** | **42,9%** | **196** | **100%** |

Interesting to see is that only 23 respondents of the 195 respondents who filled in the questionnaire indicate that they own a seasonal ticket of the football club. This is only 11,8% of the whole sample. Almost 57% of the sample indicated to be a supporter. This shows that being a supporter is not about having a seasonal ticket but depends on other characteristics. The table shows that not all respondents indicate themselves as supporters go to activities or games of FC Emmen. 99 respondents suggest that they are a supporter and do go to activities of games but 13 supporters, which is 11,6% of the supporters never attend any event or match of the football club. However, 88% of the supporters do go to games of events of Emmen. This clearly shows that not all respondents who indicate themselves as supporters go to games or events. Next, of the non-supporters, the biggest proportion (65,5%) never attend any events or games, but 34,5% occasionally attend games or activities. Therefore, it seems that for respondents being a supporter does not depend on physically going to events or games of the football club. Since not all the supporters attend events or games, and a proportion of the non-supporters do go to games or events occasionally, respondents might not use this behaviour to indicate themselves as supporters.

97% of the supporters follow the local professional football club in de media. The biggest group of non-supporters do not follow the football club in the media (63,1%). This might suggest the difference between supporters and non-supporters since a large proportion of the supporter follow the club in the media. Interestingly, these results go against the way a supporter is defined in the literature.

### 4.3.3 Top-of-mind associations of supporters and non-supporters
In Table 13, the qualitative results of the top-of-mind associations are listed. The results differentiate supporters and non-supporters. The amount of top-of-mind associations with FC Emmen is

significantly lower for non-supporters than for supporters. This is also visible in the word clouds of the top-of-mind associations of supporters and non-supporters (Figure 7). In the word clouds, it becomes that FC Emmen does play a big role within the top-of-mind associations of supporters. At non-supporters, FC Emmen is present, however, on a much smaller foot than at supporters. Furthermore, 'Wildlands' and the 'Zoo' are also very present in both word clouds. Due to the sample size of respectively 112 and 84, the frequencies of non-supporters are lower.
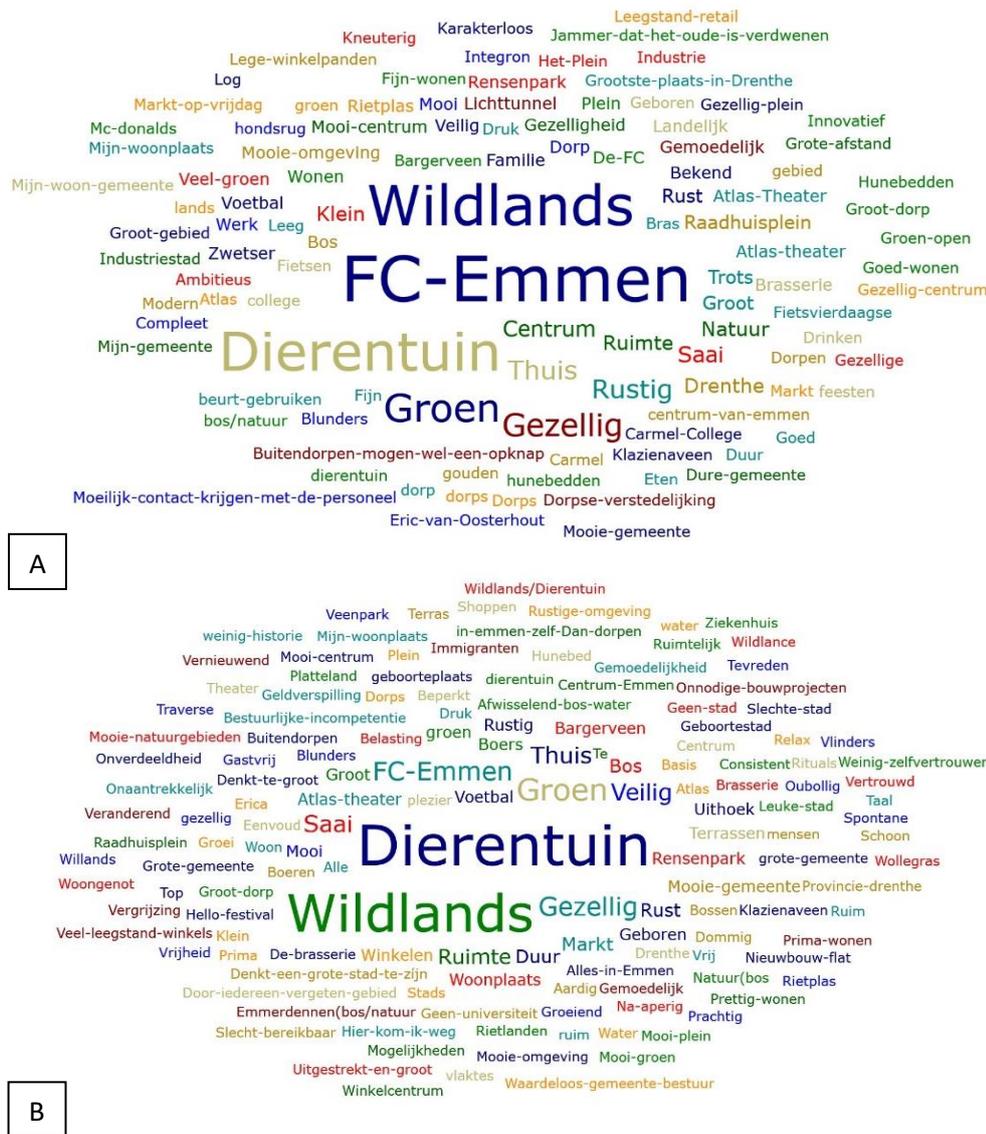


*Figure 7: Word clouds top-of-mind associations supporters (A), and non-supporters (B)*

Table 13 shows that there are only few differences between the top-of-mind associations of supporters and non-supporters. Overall, the main difference can be found in the FC Emmen category, which is more often named by supporters than by non-supporters.

| # | Top-of-mind associations supporters | Frequency | # | Top-of-mind associations Non-supporter | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| #1 | FC Emmen | 32x | #1 | Zoo | 20x |
| #2 | Wildlands | 27x | #2 | Wildlands | 18x |
| #3 | Zoo | 26x | #3 | Green | 10x |
| #4 | Green | 20x | #4 | Cozy | 7x |
| #5 | Cozy | 13x | #5 | Spacious | 7x |
| #6 | Quite | 12x | #6 | Atlas theatre | 6x |
| #7 | Home | 8x | #7 | FC Emmen | 6x |
| #8 | Spacious | 7x | #8 | Quite | 5x |
| #9 | Nice living | 6x | #9 | Safe | 4x |
| #10 | Boring | 5x | #10 | Home | 4x |

From Table 14 below we can see that the top-of-mind associations are clustered into the predefined categories of the quantitative study. What stands out is that for non-supporters the physical appearance is mentioned most often, and for supporters the entertainment opportunities. Next to that, the relative  shares of all the categories is surprisingly similar. With the first category with 36,7% for non-supporters and 36,6% for supporters, the second with 33,3% vs 32,3%, the third with 21,8% and 22,7% and the last one with 7,2% and 9,2%. This shows that there are not big difference between the categories in this qualitative examination. This is in line with the quantitative results discussed below.

Table 14: Top-of-mind associations clustered in predefined categories; supporters and non-supporters

|  | Supporters | Non-supporters |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical appearance** | 105x = 32,2% | 76x = 36,7% |
| **Entertainment opportunities** | 119x = 36,6% | 69x = 33,3% |
| **Social environment** | 71x = 21,8% | 47x = 22,7% |
| **Community services** | 30x = 9,2% | 15x = 7,2% |

### 4.3.4 Appreciation of supporters and non-supporters

#### 4.3.4.1 Physical appearance

Results for physical appearance are shown in Table 15. The first thing standing out is that the means for all the elements of the physical appearance are higher for supporters than for non-supporter. This indicates that supporters are overall more satisfied with the physical appearance of their municipality

than non-supporters. Nonetheless, the difference of means for all the elements is quite small, especially for attractive scenery with a difference of 0.08. Next to that, the location element has a difference of 0,19 and architecture/buildings of 0,28. This means that the biggest difference between supporters and non-supporters is the architecture/building element. Overall, the physical appearance has a different average between supporters and non-supporter over all the three elements of 0,19.

Next to comparing the means, independent sample t-tests are conducted to investigate if the differences in means are significant or not. Results are shown in Table 15. None of the elements of physical appearance are significantly different on a standard level of 95%. However, on a significant level of 90% the difference between supporters and non-supporter on the element of architecture is significant. This is also the case for overall physical appearance, which is significantly different on a level of 90%, and therefore supporters appreciate the physical environment slightly better than non-supporters.

*Table 15: Appreciation of physical appearance supporters and non-supporters*

|  | Attractive scenery | Location in the country | Architecture/ Buildings | Physical appearance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N Supporter Non-supporter | 111 84 | 111 83 | 110 82 | 111 84 |
| Mean Supporter Non-supporter | 4,07 3,99 | 2,82 2,63 | 2,95 2,67 | 3,29 3,10 |
| Mode Supporter Non-supporter | 4,00 4,00 | 3,00 3,00 | 3,00 3,00 | 3,33 3,00 |
| St. Dev. Supporter Non-supporter | 1,011 0,925 | 1,089 1,021 | 1,003 0,917 | 0,774 0,687 |
| Result t-test | t0,606(186), p=0,545 | t1,257(192), p=0,210 | t1,947(190), p=0,053 | t1,790(193), p=0,075 |

In relation to the qualitative part of the study, the small differences in scenery is something that is corresponding with the top-of-mind associations. Supporters refer to the scenery in the qualitative top-of-mind associations 63x times, while 39x references are made by non-supporters about the scenery. On a relative note is that respectively 18,8% and 19,4%. Most of the references made by both groups is based on the natural and rural aspects of the scenery, such as the woods, the green character of the place and the villages. The same applies for location, there the results indicate 6,3% for non-supporters and a 5,5% for supporters. Both groups refer to the location aspects in the qualitative part to different specific neighbourhoods and the size of the municipality. Where in the qualitative part a significant difference is visible between supporters and non-supporters based on the element of architecture on a 90% significance level, this difference is not present in the qualitative data, where supporters refer to the architecture of a 6,5% and non-supporters 6,3% based on the overall data. Also both groups refer mainly to the architecture of the city centre of Emmen. No reference is made of both group to the stadium of FC Emmen. A more detailed discussion on the stadium will be presented later in this chapter.

Next to that, one of the football related elements clearly refers to the stadium. According to the literature the stadium is the most powerful way to see that football is localized. Most supporters indicate that the stadium of FC Emmen is an essential element of Emmen (68 agree/11 completely agree), which is 70,5% to agree. Only three supporters disagree or completely disagreed (2,7%), and 29 supporters are neutral in the matter (25,9%). The non-supporters are more critical of the stadium, with 17 completely disagreeing and 24 disagreeing, almost half of all the non-supporters. Also, a big part of the non-supporters is neutral in de matter comparable with supporters with 26 respondents. However, some non-supporters agreed that the FC Emmen station was an important element of Emmen (15 respondents) and, two non-supporters indicated that it is a very important element of the municipality. Based on an independent sample t-test comparing supporters and non-supporters on the matter of the stadium, its becomes clear that the with a significant level of 100% it can be assumed that supporter are valuing the stadium better than non-supporters.

Another football related element that has been present in the literature and has be investigated in this questionnaire are the physical place of the club and its connection to the reasons to support. Literature has indicated that the choice of a favourite club was because it was the local club or club of the city from which they originally resided. As Such, the club is also a representation of their local community (Charleston, 2008). Results have indicated that most supporters are supporter because they are living in Emmen. 64 respondents and 57,1% of the supporters indicate that they support FC Emmen because they live in Emmen. Nineteen respondents are neutral about this, and only eight persons indicate that being a supporter of Emmen is not because they are currently living in the municipality. Therefore, the results clearly show that the results are corresponding with the literature that the choice of the club is because they reside in that area.

### 4.3.4.2 Community services
The next category discussed is the community services, including local government, public services, job opportunities and public transport. For this category on all elements supporter score higher than non-supporters. This is comparable with the results of the physical appearance. However, idem with physical appearance, the differences in mean are rather small. The effective local politics the difference is 0,12, public services 0,11, job opportunities 0,05 and public transport 0,17. Again these numbers are rather small but positive in favour of supporters. This is also visible again in the overall community

services, which indicate a difference of 0,12. This shows that supporters are overall slightly more positive/satisfied with the community services present in the municipality of Emmen than non-supporters. However, based on the results of the independent sample t-test  none of the elements of community services is significant on a level of 90% or 95%.

*Table 16: Results appreciation community services; supporters and non-supporters*

|  | Effective local politics | Good public services | Good job opportunities | Good public transport | Community services |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **N** <br> Supporter <br> Non-supporter | 92 <br><br> 72 | 108 <br><br> 83 | 103 <br><br> 80 | 105 <br><br> 77 | 111 <br><br> 84 |
| **Mean** <br> Supporter <br> Non-supporter | 3,01 <br> 2,89 | 3,57 <br><br> 3,46 | 2,98 <br><br> 2,93 | 3,39 <br><br> 3,22 | 3,28 <br><br> 3,16 |
| **Mode** <br> Supporter <br> Non-supporter | 3,00 <br><br> 3,00 | 4,00 <br><br> 4,00 | 3,00 <br><br> 3,00 | 4,00 <br><br> 3,00 | 3,25 <br><br> 3,25 |
| **St. Dev** <br> Supporter <br> Non-supporter | 0,883 <br><br> 0,832 | 0,997 <br><br> 0,954 | 0,929 <br><br> 0,938 | 1,087 <br><br> 1,119 | 0,732 <br><br> 0,655 |
| **Results t-test** | $t0,900(162)$, $p=0,369$ | $t0,814(189)$, $p=0,417$ | $t0,400(181)$, $p=0,690$ | $t1,027(180)$, $p=0,306$ | $t1,183(193)$, $p=0,238$ |

Concerning the qualitative part of the study, it is evident that public services, job opportunities and public transport are barely present for both supporters and non-supporters. Non-supporters make only one reference about the job opportunities and three references regarding job opportunities and public services by supporters. These all represent less than one per cent of the total qualitative results. Other responses to the community services focus on the local government. As seen in the previous part, respondents are rather negative regarding the local government and its' effectiveness. Based on the qualitative results, non-supports have a higher frequency in associating with the bad performance local government and are therefore also a bit more critical towards them.

Next to that, based on the literature on the football related elements is became clear that in the search for acknowledgement by others, cities often subsidize the local football club. This also applies for FC Emmen which is subsidized by local and regional governments. Most supporters agreed with the

statement and indicated that it is good that tax money is spent on the football club. Four supporting respondents disagreed with the statement. Next to that, 13 respondents where disagreeing. Furthermore, a substantial number of 32 supporters were neutral in the matter. The non-supporters are more critical towards the spending of tax funds. 46 of the 84 non-supporter indicated that they disagreed with the statement. With 31%, most non-supporters agreed or disagreed and did not have a strong opinion on the matter. Only seven respondents agreed, and zero completely agreed. Results of an independent t-test between the supporters and non-supporters, shows with complete certainty that supporters are more positive regarding the provision of tax money for the football club than non-supporter.

### 4.3.4.3 Social environment

The category of social environment consists of the cleanness of the environment, the safety of the environment and the friendliness and kindness of the inhabitants. Again, the supporters seem to be more satisfied with these elements in comparison to the non-supporters. The mean differences are for clean environment 0,18, for safe environment 0,17 and for friendly inhabitants 0,16 (see Table 19). This is also visible in the overall social environment, which has a mean difference of 0,17. No differences can be found in the mode of the three elements. None of the elements of social environment is significant with an independent t-test for supporter and non-supporter on a significant level of 95%. On a significant level of 90%, friendly inhabitants of supporters and non-supporter is significant, and the overall social environment is also significant.

*Table 17: Results appreciation social environment; supporters and non-supporters*

|  | Clean environment | Safe environment | Friendly inhabitants | Social environment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | | | | |
| Supporter | 110 | 109 | 111 | 111 |
| Non-supporter | | 80 | 83 | 84 |
| | 81 | | | |
| Mean | | | | |
| Supporter | 3,81 | 3,85 | 4,14 | 3,93 |
| Non-supporter | | | | |
| | 3,62 | 3,68 | 3,98 | 3,76 |
| Mode | | | | |
| Supporter | 4,00 | 4,00 | 4,00 | 4,00 |
| Non-supporter | 4,00 | 4,00 | 4,00 | 4,00 |
| *St. Dev.* | 0,748 | 0,768 | 0,630 | 0,562 |
| | 0,902 | 0,708 | 0,765 | 0,662 |
| Result t-test | | | | |

| | t1,559(152), p=0,121 | t1,629(187), p=0,105 | t1,678(192), p=0,095 | t1,958(193), p=0,052 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Concerning the qualitative part of the study, supporters are a bit more optimistic about the friendly inhabitants and refer to the hospitality and the pleasant behaviour of inhabitants more often than non-supporters. Also, non-supporters more often refer to a safe environment, where supporters focussed on safety only twice the non-supporters referred to safety times. Often references are made regarding the home including the sense of feeling of home, and the city's general atmosphere. This is done by both groups who refer to the positive atmosphere with top-of-mind associations such as cosy and nice and to more negative associations such as 'boring' and 'busy'.

There are also football related elements that are focusing on the social environment of the municipality. First of all, derbies are games that are played against spatially near neighbours. Theory has indicated that winning a derby create a strong sense of us against them and therefore strengthen the representative of the locality. Not all the supporters of FC Emmen in this data-set are extra happy when the team wins a derby. Five respondents completely disagreed with the statement, and another four just disagreed (8%). Also, a large proportion of the sample said that they were neutral and therefore extra happy or not with winning a derby (n=20, 17,9%). However, most of the supporters were extra pleased about winning a derby. This is 83 of the 112 respondents. The mode for supporters is five, and the mode for non-supporters is tree (neutral). Of the non-supporters, 17 completely disagreed, and 11 disagreed with the statement that winning a derby makes them extra happy. 28 respondents were neutral in this part, and 25 agreed with the statement. Only three respondents of the 84 completely agreed. Results of an independent sample t-test also indicate that with complete certainty supporters are more positive relating winning a derby than non-supporters. Therefore, it seems that derbies due create a stronger sense of us against them. By defining the opponent as specially near, the sense of 'them' is especially stronger at derbies.

Secondly, according to the literature supporters of the local football club seem to feel connected to other supporters in a kind of imagined community. Interesting enough is that the results indicated that most supporters do not feel connected to other FC Emmen supporters. This is in the light of imagined communities, where people in the same community do not necessarily know each other but still feel connected to other supporters. Only 32,7% of the respondents (n=37) feel connected to other supporters of FC Emmen. Most people are neutral. They do not feel connected to other supporter but also do not feel disconnected. This is almost half of all the supporters (47,8%, N= 54). A small part of the supporters does not feel connected at all with other supporters (n=6 completely disagree; n=16 disagree). Due to the fact that this question was only asked to supporters, a comparison between supporters and non-supporters cannot be made.

### 4.3.4.5 Entertainment opportunities

Entertainment opportunities consist out of restaurant, nightlife and shopping. Again supporters are more satisfied with the elements than non-supporters. With mean differences of 0,20, 0,10 and 0,21 and an overall mean difference of 0,16. Results can be found in Table 21. Table 21 also shows the results for the independent t-test for entertainment opportunities. None of the elements of entertainment opportunities is significant, with an independent t-test for supporter and non-supporter

on a significant level of 95%. On a significance level of 90% there is a difference between supporters and non-supporters on the element of restaurants, which is significant.

*Table 18: Results appreciation entertainment opportunities; supporters and non-supporters*

|  | Restaurants | Nightlife | Shopping | Entertainment opportunities |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **N** Supporter Non-supporter | 109 82 | 104 75 | 111 83 | 111 84 |
| **Mean** Supporter Non-supporter | 4,07 3,87 | 2,66 2,56 | 3,73 3,52 | 3,50 3,36 |
| **Mode** Supporter Non-supporter | 2,00 3,00 | 4,00 4,00 | 4,00 4,00 | 3,33 3,58 |
| **St Dev.** Supporter Non-supporter | 0,754 0,926 | 1,039 0,842 | 0,884 0,955 | 0,692 0,738 |
| **Result t-test** | t1,706(189), p=0,090 | t0,735(174), p=0,464 | t1,595(192), p=0,112 | t1,396(193), p=0,164 |

This significant difference between supporters and non-supporters on the topic of restaurants is not highly visible in the qualitative data, where non-supporters refer 4% of the top-of-min associations to restaurants and supporter 5%. The associations here refer to 'Brasserie' most times, a central café in the city centre of Emmen.

Comparing all the four categories to each other (see Table 23), clearly shows that supporters are more satisfied with their living environment in all aspects. However, the mean differences are not very high. For physical appearance, the mean difference is 0,19, for social environment, the mean difference is 0,16, for community services the mean difference is 0,12 and entertainment opportunities has a mean difference of 0,14. This means that the physical appearance is the highest difference, mainly due to the difference in satisfaction of the architecture. The most negligible difference is community services, which is primarily due to the differences in job opportunities. Only the overall social environment and the overall physical appearance are significant with a significant level of 90%.

Based on the football related elements, it is assumed that the games of FC Emmen can be seen as an entertainment opportunity for supporter. Based on the results becomes clear from the answer to the

question: "*Going to FC Emmen is for me an outing", that m*ost respondents do indicate that going to games is an entertainment opportunity. Only a few respondents stated that it is not an outing for them, but by far the biggest group, more than 70% of the respondents indicate that they visit FC Emmen as an outing. However, due to the skip logic performed in the questionnaire, only respondents who indicate that they go to an event of FC Emmen occasionally had to fill in this questions. Therefore, a statistical comparison between supporters and non-supporters was not possible.

## 4.5 Overall residents' place image

The independent t-test for overall residents' place image among supporters and non-supporters is with a significant level of 95% significant (see Table 24). This means a significant difference in the mean of residents' place image between supporters and non-supporters.

Table 19: Results t-test overall residents' place image

| Input t-test | Mean | St. Dev. | Result t-test |
|---|---|---|---|
| Residents' place image supporters | 3,50 | 0,511 | t2,105(193), p=0,037 |
| Resident's place image non-supporters | 3,35 | 0,519 | |

45

# 5. Discussion and conclusion

The goal of the study is to explore the impact of the local professional football club on the residents' place image of the municipality of Emmen. This chapter first explains the results with references made to previous studies according to three sub questions, followed by some concluding remarks. Furthermore, the generalizability and the validity including the limitations of the study are discussed, This is followed by the practical considerations and policy implications. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research and improvements in the current work.

## 5.1 Overall place image

The findings revealed a difference in residents' place image of the municipality based on top-of-mind associations and appreciation of the items. The top-of-mind associations show that the Zoo of Emmen is the most powerful place image for the municipality. This is in accordance with the marketing of Emmen, which is mainly focused on this main attraction in the city (Tripadvisor, 2011). Literature suggested that many capitals and metropolitan cities have specific features that differentiate them from others (Lynch, 1960). Whereas the literature states that smaller cities often lack a dominant feature, this is not the case for Emmen due to the presence of the Zoo. Furthermore, when categorizing the top-of-mind associations in the predefined categories, the physical appearance is named most often. These are elements in the physical environment that can be gazed upon. This is important, according to Urry (1990), who stated that the most prominent aspects of the place image are items that can be gazed upon. The physical category lends itself to this. These physical elements often refer to the natural and rural elements. The study of Rijnks and Strijker (2013) on the image of the Veenkoloniën, which included the whole municipality of Emmen as well, also indicated the rural elements to be of importance. Most striking resembles are the top-of-mind associations 'spacious', 'quite' and 'nature', which appear in both studies. The study also shows a fair share of associations focused on the local professional football club, FC Emmen. That a football club is not a placeless organization and can represent a certain place is present in the literature (Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002; Edensor and Millington, 2008). This is emphasized by this study which shows FC Emmen as an important element within the place image of residents. When looking at residents' appreciation on different elements of their living environment, residents are most positive about the social environment. They appreciate the safe and clean environment of Emmen and the friendly inhabitants.. In addition, the entertainment opportunities in the municipality are also appreciated by the inhabitants, which is consistent with the qualitative data that mainly focused on the entertainment opportunities.

Overall, it can be concluded that the most powerful image refers to the Zoo of Emmen. Also, FC Emmen is also frequently named and therefore, the entertainment opportunities played an essential role within the residents' place image based on top-of-mind associations. The social environment, its clean and safe environment, is appreciated by the residents. Community services does not seem to not play an important role within the place image of residents due to the low amount of associations made about this element and the low appreciation.

## 5.2 Differences and similarities between supporters and non-supporters

First of all, it is interesting to see that people who self-identify as being supporters do not always behave like supporters. Based on the literature, it was expected that supporters would regularly attend

matches (Giulianotti, 2005). Although based on this study, supporters do not attend matches regularly. According to this study, the biggest difference between supporters and non-supporters is that most people who self-identify as being a supporter follow the team in the media, and most of the non-supporters don't. This might be due to the COVID-regulations, since going to games was not possible at the time of examining. However, these results indicate that there are more supporters present in Emmen without it being visible to the outside world. This might have implications for the way the government might look at the popularity of the football club and their decisions relating to place branding practices. At this point, the study gained new insights that are different from what the literature suggests.

Based on the differences and similarities between supporters and non-supporters, it became clear that supporters are overall significantly more positive about their living environment in comparison with non-supporters. The literature already suggested that the perceptions of place can differ between various target groups' different perspectives and interests (Zenker and Beckmann, 2013). However, a possible explanation for the difference between supporters and non-supporter is the Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner (1979). This shows that individuals define themselves as part of social groups according to different interests, which distinguished a strong difference between 'us' and 'them'. In this case, supporters are more connected and non-supporters have a less strong identity to the place. Literature on the relationship between sport and specific football and a place shows that sports can create a feeling of pride and enthusiasm among supporters for a particular club (Bale, 2000). However, these clubs are not placeless organizations, but always exist within a specific location (Edensor and Millington, 2008). Therefore, a possible explanation is that this pride and enthusiasm is communicated to the place itself.

So it can be concluded that comparing the supporters and non-supporters, supporters associate more often with the football club than non-supporters. The appreciation of items shows that supporters are more positive about all the elements of the place image, and this is also statistically proven with independent sample t-tests.

## 5.3 Football related elements

Results have shown that the local professional football club has an impact on the place image of residents of the municipality of Emmen. Now, it is interesting to see which elements of this football club are valued by supporters or non-supporter, to gain insight into the different aspects within the football club. Literature has shown that due to the competitive nature of football, imagination and discourses of imagined communities, on 'us' and 'them', can be created (Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002). Due to the fact that clubs are not placeless organisations and exist in a specific location, the othering can take on spatial characteristics as people identify themselves with and against places (Rijnks and Strijker, 2013). Interestingly enough, the study has indicated that most supporters do not feel connected to other FC Emmen supporters. This seems to indicate that the supporters do not form a strong imagined community based on the theory of Anderson (1991) and therefore the discourses on 'us' are not that evident. Nonetheless, derbies do play a role since supporters are more satisfied when winning a derby. The literature has indicated that these games are the most critical and emotional matches in the football season, due to the reproduction of the territorial categorizations that helps to identify the 'we' in the territory (Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002). However, literature also indicate that the sense of 'othering' is less present for supporters who do not attend away-games,

since they do not encounter large groups of rival supporters (Giulianotti, 2005). Rivals of derbies are closer, more easily assessable at derby games and the othering process is more present during these games (Davis, 2015). Therefore, it seems that the identification of 'we' is not really present, since the supporters do not feel a strong connection as a imagined community, but do feel a strong othering with 'them', due to the presence of derbies.

As the case of many other cities, the city and province of Emmen/Drenthe has subsidized the local professional football club (Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002). Especially in this case, where the team was promoted to a higher league, money was needed to make the stadium ready for this promotion (Provincie Drenthe, 2018). Interesting enough is that most supporters people do not indicate a problem related this subsidy. Therefore, it might be possible to conclude that supporters are less critical on money flow than non-supporters.

## 5.4 Concluding remarks

The study aimed to gain insight into the residents' perspective of place image without focusing on the tourist aspects of the place, since residents are well understudied in the literature so far. Through this study, it was possible to create a better understanding of measuring the residents' place image. Furthermore, the study also tried to get insight into the imageability of smaller cities compared with capitals and metropolitan areas. This study has shown that small areas can also have specific features that differentiate them from others, such as the zoo and for a smaller notion and the local professional football club. The study has also gained insight into the role of the local professional football club within the image that inhabitants have and has therefore filled a gap in the literature on this aspect. The study hypothesized that the nationalism that is present at national football teams could also be witnessed on a local scale. The study accepted this hypothesis and showed that the local football club could impact residents' place image. More specific, this research tried to find an answer to the question: *"What is the impact of a local professional football club, FC Emmen, on the place image of residents of a post-industrial municipality, Emmen, in the Netherlands?".* Therefore, a qualitative and quantitative questionnaire among inhabitants of the municipality of Emmen was conducted. This study has proven that the local professional football club has an impact on the resident's place image, due to the presence of the football club in the top-of-mind associations. Furthermore, this is also present in the more positive appreciation of supporters compared to non-supporters about the municipality of Emmen. Especially derbies, the stadium and the presence of the club in the media seems to contribute to the favourable image of FC Emmen and therefore the municipality as a whole. Therefore, the hypothesis discussed at the beginning of the research is accepted. The local professional football club can have an impact on the place image of residents' of a post-industrial municipality in the Netherlands.

## 5.5 Generalisations of findings

When making conclusions, it is essential to reflect upon the generalizability of the study. The generalizability of the study reflects on the descriptive findings of the effectiveness of the representation of the population (Kukull & Ganguli, 2012). The distribution of the questionnaire was done online due to the COVID-19 measurements that were in place during the data collection. This made it hard to create a representative sample of the total population. Respondents age 21 to 30 and age 60+ are underrepresented in the sample. Therefore, the results are limited for those groups. The sample did gain a good division between self-defined supporters and non-supporters since both groups were represented in the study (Dimmock et al., (2016). Furthermore, the case study of Emmen might

be generalized to other post-industrial middle-sized areas that have a local professional football team, such as Tilburg, Waalwijk or Almelo. Especially the results that indicate that supporters are overall more positive about their living environment than non-supporters can be experienced in other similar places as well. However, the qualitative part on top-of-mind association is harder to generalize since it depends on other elements within a city of place that can be gazed upon (Urry, 1990). Overall, the case study has shown that the football club impacts the place image of residents and that other cases of the same kind of cities and same kind of football clubs are likely to have the same kind of results.

## 5.6 Validity

Strengths concerning the validity of the results are that the study is based on existing studies focusing on residents´ place image. The article of Stylidis (2016) is used as a basis for the questionnaire conducting in this study. Furthermore, this method is complemented with a free associations part used in other studies such as Zenker and Beckmann (2013). Nonetheless, it might be questionable if the questionnaire did measure what needed to be measured. Especially, the narrow statements as part of the categorization of the appreciation can raise questions. This is due to the fact that the study creates many inductive codes based on the four categories that were present in the quantitative part. This might indicate that the quantitative part might not be able to gain a complete understanding of all the elements important for place image. Besides that, the sample was done entirely online through social media with a snowball method. No indications can be found that the questionnaire is shared in specific football groups, also because it is not known by the respondents on forehand that the questionnaire had a specific focus on the football or the football club. Therefore a bias towards football supporters is not expected.

## 5.7 Practical considerations and policy implications

The study has gained insight into the practical consideration that can be taken into account. Results have shown that the biggest difference between supporters and non-supporters is that supporters follow the team in the media instead of going to the matches in the stadium. This is different than expected from the literature. Therefore, it is evident for governments that there might be more supporters present in the municipality than expected based on the presence of residents at games or the possession of a seasonal ticket. The number of supporters seems to be bigger than expected based on physical behaviour, and the football team might play a bigger role in the place image than expected based on previous studies. This is especially important because supporters appreciate the municipality better than non-supporters. Therefore, it might be fruitful for local authorities to use the local professional football club to improve the residents' place image of the municipality. As explained, the more positive residents are, the more willing they are to stay in the region. A policy recommendation for post-industrial municipalities in the Netherlands facing population decline is to use the local professional football clubs in their place branding towards their own residents, called warm place branding (Hospers, 2011). In this way, it might be possible to create more supporters of the football club and to create a more positive population.

## 5.8 Recommendations for future research & Improvements for the current work

It is important to note that place image is a product of human social activity, and therefore its construct may vary in time (Hay, 2016). Next to that, the specific focus of the local professional football club is a high social construct and social institution that also provides new results and information over time. Thus, what the place image is and the role of the local professional football club within this image depends on the time and circumstances of the research. Therefore, it might be interesting to replicate

this research on place image and the role of the local football club next year because the football club is playing in another league next year due to the degradation of the club during this study. It might be interesting to explore if meanings have changed. Furthermore, the same questionnaire can be conducted in other places in the Netherlands that have struggled with its image before and have a local professional football club to create an extensive overview of the meaning of local professional football clubs in the resident's place image. Improvement of the current work for further research is separating the qualitative top-of-mind associations and the quantitative appreciation part. I would recommend further research to separate these two elements, conduct research in two phases. In that way, it would be possible to take the answers of the first qualitative part into account while creating the questions for the second quantitative part.

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# Appendix

Appendix 1: Justification of the questionnaire (Questions are in made in Dutch, justification is in English).

| Topic | # | Dimension | Attribute | Question | Type of variabel | Source | Reason for selection |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Top-of-mind associations** | 1 | | | Als u aan de gemeente Emmen denkt, wat zijn de eerste drie woorden die bij u opkomen?<br>-<br>-<br>- | Nominaal | Zenker and Beckmann (2013) | Introduction question at the start of the questionnaire to gain a broad overview of the elements that residents think of when hearing Emmen. These can be both physical objects as emotional. These can be categorized in the 4 elements discussed: physical, social, community and entertainment. |
| **Appreciation Place image** | 2 | **Physical appearance** | Scenery | "Emmen… heeft een aantrekkelijk landschap" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the four elements of the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). |
| | 3 | | Architecture | "Emmen…heeft mooie architectuur/gebouwen" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the four elements of the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). |
| | X | | Weather | X | X | X | Weather is not relevant, because it is compared in the scale of the Netherlands and the weather is not different/exceptional in Emmen/Drenthe. Therefore, this question is not copied form the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). |
| | 4 | | General location | "Emmen…. Heeft een goede ligging ten opzichte van andere plekken in Nederland" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the location of Emmen in the Northern part of the Netherlands, quite a distance away from the larger cities and the capital of the Netherlands. |
| | 5 | **Community environment** | local government | "Emmen… heeft een effectieve lokale politiek" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the four elements of the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Public services | "Emmen.. heeft goede publieke voorzieningen (bijvoorbeeld onderhoud groen, informatievoorziening" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the four elements of the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). |
| | 6 | | Job opportunities | "Emmen… biedt goede baankansen" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the four elements of the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). |
| | 7 | | Transportation | "Emmen… heeft goed openbaar vervoer" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the four elements of the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). |
| | 8 | **Social environment** | Clean environment | "Emmen.. is een schone gemeente" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the four elements of the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). |
| | 9 | | Safe environment | "Emmen.. is een veilige gemeente" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the four elements of the article of Stylidis et al. (2016) |
| | 10 | | Friendly inhabitants | "Emmen…heeft vriendelijke inwoners" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the four elements of the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). |
| | 11 | **Entertainment opportunities** | Shopping | "Emmen .. is een goede plek om te winkelen" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the four elements of the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). |
| | 12 | | Nightlife | "Emmen.. heeft een bruisend nachtleven" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the four elements of the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). |
| | 13 | | Restaurants | "Emmen.. heeft goede restaurants" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | Based on the four elements of the article of Stylidis et al. (2016). |
| **Football related elements** | 14 | **Supporter information** | Seasonal ticket | "Heeft u een seizoenkaart van FC Emmen" | Nominal (Yes/No) | - | To define the difference between supporters and non-supporters. |

| | 15 | | Games | "Bent u wel eens naar een activiteit van FC Emmen geweest, bijvoorbeeld een wedstrijd of evenement" | Nominal (Yes/No) | - | To define the difference between supporters and non-supporters. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 16 | | Home games | "Ik ga naar de thuiswedstrijden van FC Emmen (indien toegankelijk)" | Ordinal (never, sometimes, often, always) | - | To define the difference between supporters and non-supporters. |
| | 17 | | Away games | "Ik ga naar uitwedstrijden van FC Emmen" | Ordinal (never, sometimes, often, always) | - | To define the difference between supporters and non-supporters. |
| | 18 | | Events | "Ik doe mee aan andere activiteiten/events die FC Emmen organiseert (bijvoorbeeld bijwonen trainingen, Kantinepraot, Vrienden van FC Emmen event)" | Ordinal (never, sometimes, often, always) | - | To define the difference between supporters and non-supporters. |
| | 19 | | Social | "Ik bezoek samen met andere mensen de wedstrijden van FC Emmen" | Ordinal (never, sometimes, often, always) | - | To define the difference between supporters and non-supporters. |
| | 20 | **Self-defining supporter** | | "Voelt u zich een supporter van FC Emmen" | Nominal (Yes/No) | - | To define the difference between supporters and non-supporters. |

| Football Elements | 21 | Physical appearance | Stadium | "Het FC Emmen stadion vind ik belangrijk onderdeel van Emmen" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Canter et al., (1989); Hague and Mercer (1998); | To see if the most prominent tangible physical aspects of the local professional football club is important in the place image of residents. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 22 | | Location | "Ik ben supporter van FC Emmen omdat ik uit Emmen kom" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Edensor and Millington, 2008 | To see if people would be a supporter of FC Emmen because they see it as part of their city/municipality and support is (among other things) due to this. |
| | 23 | Social environment | Derby | "Ik vind het extra blij als Emmen wint van FC Groningen of PEC Zwolle | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002 | Based on the notion that people would feel more connected to the football club and therefore to the locality if their play against spatially near team. |
| | 24 | | Imaged community | "Ik voel mij verbonden met andere supporters van FC Emmen" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002 | To see if there is a social component present at the local professional football club. |
| | 25 | Community services | Local government | "Ik vind het goed dat er belastinggeld naar FC Emmen gaat" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016) | To examine if community services related to the local professional football club play a big role according to the participant to the image of the area. |
| | 26 | Social environment | Imagined community | "Door FC Emmen heb ik nieuwe vrienden gemaakt" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Stylidis et al. (2016); Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002 | To see if there is a social component present at the local professional football club. |
| | 27 | | Imaged community | "Veel van mijn vrienden zijn supporter van FC Emmen" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002 | To find out if peole know a lot of people and associate with other supporters. |
| | 28 | Entertainment opportunity | Outing | "Naar FC Emmen gaan is voor mij een uitje" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002 | To figure out if people see FC Emmen as an entertainment opportunity. |

| | 29 | | Media | "Ik volg FC Emmen via de media (krant, tv, internet)" | Likert scale (ordinal) 1/2/3/4/5 | Van Houtum and van Dam, 2002 | To see if being a supporter is more than just visiting the stadium. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **General information** | 30 | | Age | "Wat is uw leeftijd?" | Ordinal (10-15;  16-20; 21-30;  31-40; 41-50;51-60; 60+ | (Punch, 2013) | Basic demographic questions are required in order to understand how your sample represents the population, furthermore they can be used to compare groups |
| | 31 | | Gender | "Wat is uw geslacht?" - Man - Vrouw - Anders | Nominal | (Punch, 2013) | Basic demographic questions are required in order to understand how your sample represents the population, furthermore they can be used to compare groups |
| | 32 | | Gender | "Wat is uw geslacht?" - Man - Vrouw - Anders | Nominal | (Punch, 2013) | Basic demographic questions are required in order to understand how your sample represents the population, furthermore they can be used to compare groups |
| | 33 | | Address | "Wat zijn de nummers van uw postcode?" | Nominal | (Punch, 2013) | Basic demographic questions are required in order to understand how your sample represents the population, furthermore they can be used to compare groups |

**Appendix 2: Clustering of top-of-mind association based on predefined categories**

| Entertainment opportunity | Things to do in the free time/ elements that you enjoy! I go to…. | Association | # | # | # total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Deductieve codes** | | | | | |
| | *Shopping* | Markt 4x | | | |
| | | Shoppen 1x, | | | |
| | | Winkels 1x | | | |
| | | Vlindermarkt 1x | | | |
| | | Winkelen 2x | | | |
| | | Markt vrijdag 1x | | | |
| | | Rituals 1x | | | |
| | | | 11x | | |
| | *Restaurants* | Wollegras 1x | | | |
| | | De Brasserie 5x | | | |
| | | Eten 1x | | | |
| | | Drinken 1x | | | |
| | | Mc Donalds 1x | | | |
| | | Terrassen 4x | | | |
| | | Uit eten 1x | | | |
| | | | 14x | | |
| | *Nightlife* | Zwetser 2x | | | |
| | | | 2x | | |
| | | | | 27x | |
| **Inductieve codes** | | | | | |
| | *Sport* | FC Emmen 39x | | | |
| | | De FC 2x | | | |
| | | Voetbal 4x | | | |
| | | Fietsen 1x | | | |
| | | Fiets4-daagse 1x | | | |
| | | | 47x | | |
| | *Evenementen* | Hello Festival 1x | | | |
| | | Gezellige feesten 1x | | | |
| | | Gouden pijl 1x | | | |
| | | | 3x | | |
| | *Day-trips* | Dierentuin 47x | | | |
| | | Wildlands 46x | | | |
| | | Wildlands /Dierentuin 1x | | | |
| | | Atlas theatre 6x | | | |
| | | Rensenpark 4x | | | |
| | | Theater 2x | | | |
| | | Veenpark 1x | | | |
| | | Atlas 2x | | | |
| | | | 109x | | |
| | | | | 157x | |

|  |  |  |  |  | 186x |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

| Social environment | Things about the feeling of the place I feel that Emmen |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Deductive codes** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | *Friendly inhabitants* | Vriendelijk 2x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Ouderen 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Oude mensen 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Spontane mensen 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Trots 3x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Gastvrij 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Nuchter 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Tevreden 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Aardig 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Familie 2x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Vrienden 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | 15x |  |  |
|  | *Clean environment* | Schoon 2x |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | 2x |  |  |
|  | *Safe environment* | Veilig 7x |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | 7x |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | 24x |  |
| **Inductieve codes** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | *Thuis* | Thuis 13x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Geboren 3x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Thuis komen 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Hier kom ik weg 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Mijn woonplaats 5 |  |  |  |
|  |  | Mijn woongemeente 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Mijn gemeente 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Geboorteplaats 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Woonachtig 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Geboortestad 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | 28x |  |  |
|  | *Sfeer* | Gemoedelijk 4x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Kneuterig 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Saai 9x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Gezellig 20x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Prettig 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Druk 2x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Fijn 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Rustig 10x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Relax 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Rust 5x |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | 63x |  |  |
|  | Other | Fijn 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Top 1x |  |  |  |
|  |  | Prima 1x |  |  |  |

| | | | # | # | #total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Goed 1x | | | |
| | | Onverdeeldheid 1x | | | |
| | | Compleet 1x | | | |
| | | Innovatief 1x | | | |
| | | Groei 1x | | | |
| | | Ondergewaardeerd 1x | | | |
| | | Bekend 2x | | | |
| | | | 11x | | |
| | | | | 102x | |
| | | | | | 126x |

| Community services | About the municipality and its actions and local services | Association | # | # | #total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Deductive codes** | | | | | |
| | *Job opportunity's* | Plaats waar ik werk 3x | | | |
| | | Industriestad 2x | | | |
| | | | 5x | | |
| | *Effectieve lokale government* | Uitknijpers van burgers 1x | | | |
| | | Onnodige bouwprojecten 1x | | | |
| | | Jammer dat veel van het oude verdwenen is 1x | | | |
| | | Waardeloos gemeente bestuur 1x | | | |
| | | Alles in Emmen en niet in dorpen 1x | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | Weinig zelfvertrouwen 1x | | | |
| | | Slecht besteed gemeentegeld 1x | | | |
| | | Denkt te groot 1x | | | |
| | | Denkt grote stad te zijn 1x | | | |
| | | Geldverspilling 1x | | | |
| | | Blunders 1x | | | |
| | | Ouderwets 1x | | | |
| | | Dorpen kunnen wel een opknapbeurt gebruiken 1x | | | |
| | | Moeilijk contact te krijgen met personeel 1x | | | |
| | | Consistent 1x | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Dommig 1x | | | |
| | | Na-aperig 1x | | | |
| | | Duur 4x | | | |
| | | Beperkt 1x | | | |
| | | Ambitieus 1x | | | |
| | | Eric van Oosterhout 1x | | | |
| | | | 24x | | |
| | Public services | Geen universiteit 1x | | | |
| | | Compleet 1x | | | |
| | | Mogelijkheden 1x | | | |
| | | | 3x | | |
| | Transport | X | 0x | | |
| | | | | 32x | |
| **Inductieve codes** | | | | | |
| | **Trends** | Vergrijzing 1x | 1x | | |
| | | | | 1x | |
| | | | | | 33x |

| Physical appearance | Represents the association a physical feature of the place? | Association | # | # | #total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Deductive codes** | | | | | |
| | *Scenery* | Platteland 2x | | | |
| | | Ruimtelijk 10x | | | |
| | | Leeg 1x | | | |
| | | Landelijk 2x | | | |
| | | Wijds 1x | | | |
| | | Open 2x | | | |
| | | Ruim 3x | | | |
| | | Rustige omgeving 1x | | | |
| | | Groen 27x | | | |
| | | Bossen 6x | | | |
| | | Mooi groen 1x | | | |
| | | Natuur 4x | | | |
| | | Veen 1x | | | |
| | | Mooie natuurgebieden 1x | | | |
| | | Afwisselend bos/water 1x | | | |
| | | Rietplas 1x | | | |
| | | Bos/natuur 1x | | | |
| | | Veel groen 2x | | | |
| | | Mooie natuur zoals het Bargerveen 1x | | | |
| | | Bargerveen 3x | | | |
| | | Emmerdennen bos/natuur 1x | | | |
| | | Water 1x | | | |
| | | Mooie omgeving 3x | | | |
| | | Taverse 1x | | | |
| | | Ziekenhuis 1x | | | |
| | | Hunnebed 3x | | | |
| | | Hondsrug 1x | | | |
| | | **Karakterloos 1x** | | | |
| | | Oudbollig 1x | | | |
| | | Oud 1x | | | |
| | | Dorpse verstedelijking 1x | | | |
| | | Buitendorpen 1x | | | |
| | | Groot dorp 1x | | | |
| | | Dorpen 4x | | | |
| | | Dorps 3x | | | |
| | | Vrij 3x | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | 97x | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Buildings and architecture* | Het plein 5x | | | |
| | | Raadhuisplein 4x | | | |
| | | Mooi plein 2x | | | |
| | | Centrum van Emmen 1x | | | |
| | | Centrum 6x | | | |
| | | Mooi Centrum 3x | | | |
| | | Gezellig centrum 1x | | | |
| | | Centrum Emmen 1x | | | |
| | | Winkelcentrum 2x | | | |
| | | Sober centrum 1x | | | |
| | | Modern 1x | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | Veel leegstand 3x | | | |
| | | Nieuwbouw 1x | | | |
| | | Gezellig plein 1x | | | |
| | | Weinig historie 1x | | | |
| | | | 35x | | |
| | *Geographical location* | Drenthe 5x | | | |
| | | Provincie Drenthe 1x | | | |
| | | Uithoek 3x | | | |
| | | Klazienaveen 2x | | | |
| | | Grootste plaat van Drenthe 1x | | | |
| | | Erica 1x | | | |
| | | Rietlanden 1x | | | |
| | | Groot 4x | | | |
| | | Te groot 1x | | | |
| | | Grote afstand 1x | | | |
| | | Groot gebied 1x | | | |
| | | Log 1x | | | |
| | | Grote gemeente 1x | | | |
| | | Te grote gemeente 1x | | | |
| | | Uitgestrekt /groot 1x | | | |
| | | Wijken 1x | | | |
| | | Klein 4x | 30x | | |
| | | | | 161x | |
| **Inductive codes** | *Other* | Slechte stad 1x | | | |
| | | Geen stad 1x | | | |
| | | Onaantrekkelijk 1x | | | |
| | | Slechte fietspaden 1x | | | |
| | | Slecht bereikbaar 1x | | | |
| | | Vergeten gebied 1x | | | |
| | | Mooi 4x | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Prachtig 1x | | | |
| | | Stads 2x | | | |
| | | Alles in Emmen 1x | | | |
| | | Vlinderstad 1x | | | |
| | | | 15x | | |
| | | | | 15x | |
| | | | | | 173x |